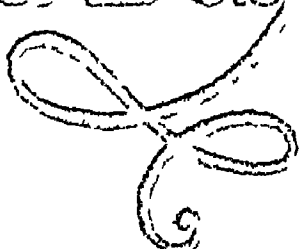


A Living Without a Boss



ILLUSTRATED

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A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

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I

THE BLUE ENVELOPE



HIS is the story of how, out of adversity, financial disaster, frustration of hope, dread for the future, I found the way to prosperity, and, as the conditions confronting me were such in effect as are to-day confronting many thousands in various professions or occupations, the way in which I wrought for deliverance may be in effect their way as well. Naturally I prefer to write anonymously, as so much of the

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intimate must needs be told, but if it should chance that certain friends or acquaintance see through the anonymity it is really immaterial

At the base of my own troubles was the fact that I had been trained to one of the callings that are money-making only within certain narrow lines, and which, by custom, do not permit a man to learn the usefulness of mechanical or laboring work. When a man with the equipment of one of the professional, semi-professional, or near-professional callings, one of the well-dressed and clean-handed callings—say, that of lawyer, teacher, small business man, clerk, book-keeper, salesman, journalist—finds that what has been his life occupation is failing him, and realizes that he has little money saved, is over forty, and is married, it is a serious situation. What is he to do? To what money-making source is he to turn? How is he going to secure bread and butter for his wife and himself for some fifteen to

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

thirty years? Such was the proposition that I found confronting me some years ago

And in the answers that I found to my own questions may be found answers to the questions of many of the other men who have been crushed, beaten, trapped, used up, worn out, by the hard relentlessness of a city, for their troubles may, in essentials, be the same as mine, although their special environment, their special problems, may be different

The man who has worn good clothes, who has lived in good surroundings, is the man who suffers most when crushing financial misfortune comes. His earning power ceases, and yet he cannot accept charity. It is like the case of the man who, when told that he must send his wife and his children to the seaside for the summer, said, "But, Doctor, I am too poor," but who, when the doctor intimated that there were helpful associations, exclaimed, "But, Doctor, I am not poor enough!"

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I was a newspaper man I began the work when I was barely more than twenty, and it was in one of the cities just west of the Mississippi From the first I had success, and so it was not at all surprising that within a few years I was planning to go to New York, the city that draws its recruits in every line of endeavor from all parts of the country When I was twenty-seven I went there, having married, the year before, a wife eight years my junior

I don't know that I can quite say why I chose the work I did I think it was only that my natural leaning was toward that kind of thing and that I let myself drift into it without sufficiently weighing the reasons, good and bad, and it was many years before I began to have doubts about the wisdom of it all

From the first, in New York, I was successful I was promptly put on the staff of one of the big dailies and before long was justified in thinking that, although by no

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

means indispensable, I could feel sure of holding my place so long as I cared to and so long as I was ready and able to throw my entire strength and energy into the work

That is one feature of it—the demands upon one's strength. I remember a newspaper friend saying, "This work takes a man of iron!"—and he was dead in two weeks, poor fellow! A New York newspaper man must live quick, work quick, die quick. There is no time even for sickness. A reporter, if he hopes for success, must be ready to work from ten to sixteen hours a day for at least six days a week—and probably seven, and the newspaper that worked its men for the longest hours was one that, in its editorial columns, loved to thunder away on behalf of the eight-hour day for working-men!

Like other men in this work, I now and then went from one paper to another, and I even tried Philadelphia for a little while,

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my wanderings being made through fancy, or on account of the changing of an editor, or through receiving flattering proposals In those days I was sought for—was bid for My changes were all changes of volition—a condition exceedingly comfortable and even mildly intoxicating Newspapers do not pension for long service, even those whose owners now and then give a long vacation in Europe or at the seashore do so arbitrarily; in none is there any particular effort to reward faithfulness, even though coupled with ability, unless the owner's attention chances to be attracted There is, therefore, no strong reason for a man's staying with one more than another unless he cares to, but after I was thirty-five I settled down to stay on with just one, the paper I had on the whole most liked, and I gave to it all my strength and devotion

The general theory of modern life is to cast a man out as soon as a younger and stronger man can be put in his place Nor

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

does this mean any particular unfairness
There is no personal ill-will toward the
person thrown out It is just a condition
that must be faced A young man, if he is
wise, will therefore choose a line of work in
which he can fairly count on such earnings
as will enable him to put aside for the in-
evitable day

There is fascination in the eager life of the
newspaper man There is wonderful fasci-
nation Every variety of life is seen Even
in a single day the contrasts and variety are
often positively amazing if one happens to
think about it in that way At noon one
may be with the President of the United
States on a flying visit to the city, at four
o'clock he may be covering a big fire over in
Brooklyn, at nine o'clock he is sent out to
look up the particulars of a prominent sui-
cide; at one in the morning he is probably
getting a great bank president out of bed
just to answer a few questions There is
continual excitement in the life One is in

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touch with everything and everybody, in touch with the world, in fact, ahead of the world, knowing what has taken place before the world can know of it

The fever of it gets into the blood, or, if it does not, and in consequence a man does not throw himself fiercely into each day's work, his work will not be up to the mark and he is sure to get the blue envelope. Often enough he gets it even when he has devotedly and with tremendous absorption done his uttermost—the blue envelope being the phrase that had come to stand for discharge among a lot of us of my time, because one of the big papers reserved the use of that color of envelope for discharges only, and, more than that, made it possible for the rest of the staff to know for whom the envelope was lying in wait by having the cluster of letter-boxes for the mail of the staff up at the front of the room in plain view. Any one glancing that way might see the tell-tale color drawn out, any one getting his

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

own letters could not well avoid seeing the blue in the box of a friend

There was a sort of fascination about the blue envelope, long before I thought of it as a possibility for myself. Without wishing to and certainly without trying to, I have often seen the blue envelope taken like a real and savage blow

I cannot speak too highly of the patience of my wife under the serious infliction of my outrageous hours of work. I do not mean only that the hours were long, but that they were so irregular that there was never certainty as to when or where I was to eat or sleep. Yet I cannot remember that there was ever a word of complaint or repining, no matter whether I was in Brooklyn or Harlem instead of being with her when she expected me to dinner, no matter whether, instead of going home at twelve, I was asked to take the midnight train for some distant point, no matter whether, after long hours of waiting, reading, and sewing, so as

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not to be either asleep or sleepy when I should arrive, I did not come till the faint light of morning was touching the streets. My wife kept my hours and we ate our after-midnight supper each night with zest and pleasure. It was really the only time in the day for talking together.

Very often on my day off, which was, at different times, each of the seven, we were forced to give up some plan we had formed by my having to go to the office in response to a telegram. Of course it was a pleasant thing to be wanted and, of course, the paper paid for the extra work, but none the less such emergency calls interfered greatly with our life.

Because of realizing how lonely and unusual my wife must find a great part of her life to be, I got into the way of arranging pleasant little times on my day off. We would have dinner at a restaurant and go to the theater, or go together to invest in a picture, a rug, a special book. Our dinner

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

invitations were few, for I never was able to accept with certainty. Once in a while a friend would drop in with me for an after-midnight supper and a couple of hours of pleasant talk, but we always knew that it was not the kind of hospitality that we should like to extend—we knew that it was an abnormal condition and that all of us ought to be in bed.

My wife's pleasures, with the exception of the few we took together, were pretty much confined to a little tea-sipping round of calls and afternoons at home, among a few friends, and to afternoon surveys of the art exhibits of the winter. My wife did not find pleasure in endless shopping, she did not search Broadway for matinées, for she did not care to go to the theater alone, even in daytime. It seems, now, as if we were living up to our early Western ideals as to taking our pleasures either together or not at all.

My earnings averaged from seventy-five to one hundred dollars a week. It would

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not be easy to express the tremendous amount of toiling energy necessary, at seven dollars and a half or eight dollars a column, to make up enough columns to give such a total, for it is not only the actual writing of so many words—it is the immense work involved in gathering, from myriad sources, enough news to demand those words

That we did not save much money will be understood by any who know the expenses of New York life. We were not extravagant, in fact, our tendencies were toward economy. But newspaper life is not a saving life, and it is hard to save with rents and general cost of living as high as they are in New York.

Whenever I was particularly prosperous for a time, and we really saved a little, there was always something to take the surplus away. There were necessary trips to our old home, in cases of sickness or death. There were pleasant vacation trips. One year I got leave of absence for a few

THE BLUE ENVELOPE

months and we went to Europe and had a royal good time seeing the things we had always longed to see, so again there was no nest-egg

I remember the first time it occurred to me that the blue envelope might some day be my own. I happened, by chance, to be at my letter-box when one of the oldest men on the staff came cheerfully into the room and cheerfully up to his box—only to draw out the fatal blue envelope—for it seemed to strike him as fatal. His face grew white and his hand trembled, although in a moment he had recovered himself. It gave me a sickish feeling to see him hurt, and then it flashed over me that that was the very thing that would some day happen to me! It made me feel pretty sober, and I began to count up just what I had accomplished in life and to estimate what the future really held. I was aghast to see that I had accomplished very little and that the future promised even less.

II

FACING FORTY



AM afraid that I had been letting myself feel pride in what I more or less subconsciously considered my intellectuality, but, if so, I was sufficiently punished by the humiliation of having to realize that for years I had averaged fully twelve hours a day of work, had given recklessly of the best that was in me of health and strength, had found little time for reading, for amusement, for social relaxation, and had earned little money in comparison not only with the successful men of my age in New York but also in comparison with the successful friends of

FACING FORTY

my own youth who had gone into business or professions and were rich and prosperous. A few were judges or corporation lawyers, at least one was a millionaire—most were broadly and materially successful.

I had never, however, allowed myself to get into the foolish way of thinking that skill in setting words down on paper is in any sense a better faculty than that of going out and accomplishing things. I always knew it was better to be able to build a bridge or a building than merely to be able to write an account of its falling or burning, I always knew that it required quite as much ability to be a Senator as to be able to interview a Senator! I never felt sympathy with the many writers and painters who consider that the mere fact of their callings makes them intellectual leaders. To use the pen to write one descriptive word after another assuredly shows no higher mental power than does the signing of one's name at the foot of a goodly check,

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when the money that the check represents has been earned through one's own efforts. The most important duty of the brain is to provide food for the body and money for the rainy day.

That for many years my space-string continued to be a good one was matter for felicitation, the space-string being the record that makes the weekly bill. A newspaper man's space-string is the principal object of his concern, and, although most men did the clipping and pasting where the Cranford ladies ate their oranges—in the privacy of their own apartments—there were always a few who loved ostentatiously to paste up their strings in full view of the staff.

With us, the space-string pasting had long been one of our pleasantest home functions. It was of never-ending interest to see through how many rooms it would stretch. Once in a while the string would reach to twenty columns and stretched from

FACING FORTY

the front windows of the apartment to the windows at the rear I think the fact that we could so long continue to find relaxation in doing so simple a thing together showed that we were essentially young It did not seem to be business, it was a sort of frolic

At length the time came when the string began to average shorter, often it would hardly reach from the parlor into the dining-room, and then, gradually and without a word spoken by either of us, we ceased to measure it together One day I heard an editor rasp out about one of the men "A reporter is only as good as his legs!" There was something horrible in it

The general fascination of the life continued Even now I can smell the printer's ink, hear the jangle of the telephone, see the men bent over their desks utterly absorbed, forgetful of everything on earth but the work in front of them There was delight in the constant struggle of going out and getting something, there was fiery delight

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in capturing a big "beat" from under the very eyes of one's rivals of the other great papers

Ah, well!—the turmoil, the excitement, the camaraderie—what a charm lay in it all!

But after a while one begins to grow old

A worn-out newspaper man is of no more use in a newspaper office than is yesterday morning's paper. Once in a while, as I approached the forty mark, I used to look with interest at the newspaper derelicts who drifted along like broken shadows. "Drink!" was the usual commentary I heard, but there came a time when I realized that there was more than that to it. Drinking is something that most newspaper men drop into to a greater or less degree. The strain is so great, the hours so long, the demand for full strength and flow of ideas so incessant, that to keep up strength and ideas—indeed, actually to keep awake at times—drink often seems inevitable. For

FACING FORTY

my own part, I have sometimes worked for forty-eight hours on a stretch without a wink of sleep, meanwhile getting my meals by chance and at haphazard, and it was merely ordinary to go to bed the moment I reached home and go to work the minute I had eaten a hasty breakfast

I began to notice that some of the men dropped off into business berths or private secretaryships, but somehow I never quite saw a chance to do this, in fact, I never thought seriously of it till I was too old. Nor did I ever get into the ranks of editors. The lower ones were not earning so much money as I was and, as to the others, no advances were ever made me by the proprietors.

I was just a good reporter. I had the newspaper instinct, could get my facts, handle and digest them, feel what was vital and set down a good straightaway account in what the editors thought was good straightaway English. Whether or

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not I can tell my own story as well as if it were the story of some one else I do not know.

As the years passed I felt headaches coming on and found that they were from my eyes. I had to have glasses—I, whose quick and accurate sight had so often helped me when only a glimpse was possible. My digestion began to disturb me; and one day it came over me, with a sickish sense of realization, that I was only a machine that was wearing out

We began to economize The lease of our apartment expired and we moved to one of lower rent We took our pleasures with less expense, and we had never been extravagant We wore our clothes longer My day off began much oftener to be a real day off, as I was rather aghast at realizing, and as soon as it had come to be that we could really count on having it to ourselves for some enjoyable relaxation we often stayed quietly at home



IT CAME OVER ME THAT I WAS ONLY A MACHINE THAT WAS
WEARING OUT

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Often I was positively weary, positively done out—and I was not old enough to be done out. I began to ask myself furiously why I had been tearing my heart out, wearing my strength out, for a newspaper that would toss me carelessly aside as soon as I should be a little more worn. Why had I not labored to better advantage for myself?

My wife had sacrificed so much for me—why, I demanded angrily of myself, had I not sooner realized that there could have been no higher ambition, no happier ambition, than that of making her happy? Of course there had been a host of pleasant things in our life together, but there had been such a host of normal and pleasant things that she had missed.

I looked at her and felt a sharp pang when I realized that she, like myself, was growing older. And from time to time there came, to torment me, the knowledge that the dearest pleasure of all had been foregone—for we had no child. We knew that,

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from our standpoint, we had no right to that most precious of all luxuries until we could afford it, and affording meant having assurance of money sufficient for education and care. Then, too, no child could be properly raised with my hours of work. It was difficult domesticity for two—impossible for three, and the shadows of coming age were beginning to fall across our path.

It came to be that I often waited for hours before an assignment came to me. And my assignments gradually decreased in importance and value. Once in a while I was even sent out to be a watcher in one of those famous cases in which each newspaper keeps a man under surveillance during every hour of the day and night, noting where he goes. One cold and rainy night I watched at a house up near Central Park, with other men, either beginners, as I noticed, or men like myself, approaching oldness; and I remember how the then "star" of my paper came up to the house, mounted the steps,

FACING FORTY

rang the bell and went in, and how we all, from the various papers, came out of the places where we had been hiding from the wind and rain and clustered about him when he came down, to ask him what he was there for and what had happened I, who myself had long been the "star," kept in the background, afraid that he would recognize me and yet equally afraid to miss what he might have to say I did not tell this to my wife

In spite of such things I felt that I could hold my place so long as I cared to and that I could make a living at it—not a good living and not a comfortable life, but still good enough to get along until I could make my indefinitely hoped-for change

Keeping on with newspaper work did not mean indecision on my part or lack of ability to act upon decision, in fact, a trait of my character which had helped materially to give me newspaper success was the power of making up my mind and acting without

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hesitation When news must be gathered and written and put into type in time for an edition of a certain hour the faculty of instant decision is precious

Now I was going on without getting away from the danger that threatened me, because I did not see anything better to change to I was looking around and more or less feeling and trying, but without result

We were perseveringly cutting down expenses I had saved a little in the course of my many years of work, I had some eight hundred dollars in the bank We were watching the outgo more closely than ever, but it was little that we could put away

The constant expenses of my life were more than ever noticeable, now that my income had decreased The pair of gloves that were worn shabby in a week—that was one of the necessities, the excessive wear of clothes and cost of laundry, the surprising total for carfares and minor expenses, the

FACING FORTY

lunches and dinners away from home—such things were a heavy drain. The newspaper paid railway fares and a considerable part of one's expenses when away from the city, but a new auditor and a new city editor had taken charge, and between the two the expense accounts of the staff were sharply and unpleasantly criticized. I felt that if I wished to keep on good terms with the new editor I must forego charging up many items which ought to be paid by the paper.

The joy of life was vanishing. There was no longer gaiety and sparkle, no longer silly little snatches of song as we dressed. Dame Care lived with us, sat down with us at our meals, slept under our roof!

III

A CITY DISCARD



NOTICED with a start one day that I was beginning to grow bald and that there were some gray hairs around my temples. I could no longer swing into the office with a breeze of confidence and a command of position and estimation. When the editor would poke a clipping at me I had to fumble with my eyeglasses, and I knew he looked at me with at least a touch of doubt—of disfavor.

Long hours in the office waiting for an assignment became more customary—and when the assignment came it would not be a big one to make up for the delay. Noth-

A CITY DISCARD

ing is more trying on the nerves than to wait in a roomful of men for an assignment, to see, time after time, the eye of the city editor range the men, estimating and appraising—and thus to wait and watch, growing more and more nervous and anxious as the hours pass and the day slips by with its possibility of earning. The later it was when the first assignment would come the longer I would wait on at night in the hope of something further, or at least of a “re-write,” at half-space rates, of some beginner’s copy or that of an out-of-town correspondent. When I ought to have been saving my strength I was wearing myself out more than ever.

One day I caught such a look in the editor’s face as positively froze me. A few hours later I noticed that there were half a dozen blue envelopes in the boxes and I actually trembled until I saw there was none in mine. I knew now—there could no longer be doubt—I knew that I was liable

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at any moment to be thrown away as carelessly as an old coat

But I fought for it I threw myself into the work with such a sudden recovery of spirit as to astonish myself and astonish the editor, for he grunted out one day, in a sort of growling sneer, a few words of reluctant approval that were worse than blame, for they were to the effect that I still had something in me, after all

How bitter that was I cannot say, it makes me almost writhe, even now, with the cruelty and pain of it To suffer a word or taunt and not be in a position to resent it—I certainly do not know of anything in this world more humiliating

One day, early in January, I got to the office feeling tired and terribly depressed I had worked far into the morning the night before, had snatched five hours' sleep and was up and off again, for I did not dare to be late, although ordinarily when a man stays on unusually late at night he does not

A CITY DISCARD

trouble himself too much to get to the office so promptly next day

I felt that my very manliness was leaving me in my anxiety to hold my place, but I could not indulge in resentment or quarreling, with the responsibility of a wife and no future No future!

I was among the first of the staff to arrive that day The porter, with a long feather duster, was striking, with lazy up-and-down strokes, at desk and typewriter, one after another The day was raw and chill out-of-doors and the big city room was full of the sickish, disagreeable odor of too much steam heat Everywhere was a disorder of paper, of mucilage bottles misplaced, of general litter There was a sort of sordidness about it all, and yet I felt thankful that I was still a part of the great system The city editor—who came early because he always went home at six, leaving the continuation of the work to the night city editor—was bent over

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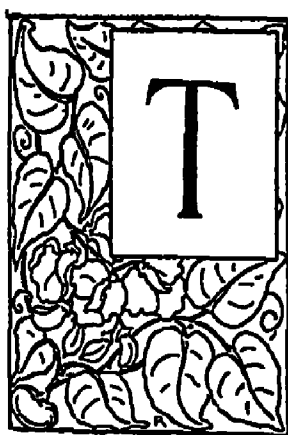
his desk, absorbed in his plans for the day

I walked to my letter-box, and as I did so I thought the editor was glancing up at me; and there, in my box, was the blue envelope!

Feeling that the editor's eyes were upon me and that he would readily find cause for a sneer, I opened the envelope as I stood there and, calmly reading the few brief words of the note that spoke curtly of a "necessary reduction of the staff," took out my wallet—the soft, well-made wallet of sunny and prosperous days when wallets were quickly filled and emptied with little thought of the morrow—and quietly put the blue envelope within

IV

THE CALL OF THE OPEN



HIS was the crisis of my life. What was I to do? I could begin to make my rounds of the different newspapers and within a few days—possibly on that very day—could get on the staff of one of them. After all, my long experience and my reputation as a man thoroughly reliable were assets, but if the paper that owed me the greatest consideration had discharged me, all that I could expect was that any other paper would discharge me on any slight pretext or any reduction of force, and at the time of my next attempt I should be still older. The vaguely golden future

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of earlier years, that had been long and gradually slipping away from me, had all at once become a threatening future—no longer a golden future, but a gold-demanding future

I was in precisely the condition of many another man who has given freely, heedlessly, recklessly, of his health and strength to the demands of city work. There no longer seemed to be any remunerative demand for anything that my hands or head could do. The city wanted to shelve me as coolly and carelessly as if I were over eighty instead of being merely over forty.

Yet, after the first shock, I felt a new strength. To some extent it came from a sense of injustice toward me, but to an even greater extent from the feeling that now, supremely, was the time to show what I could do. What threatened as a disaster and fell as a blow seemed, after the first moments of shock, to be in reality a relief, a release.

THE CALL OF THE OPEN

I walked home I did not begin by wasting time around any of the haunts of newspaper men I walked slowly home to give myself time to think and plan

I ran over all the possibilities I could think of, but almost from the first I knew what I was going to decide, I only wanted to give myself the chance to think of something else if there were something else—and there wasn't The one thing to do was to take up life in some village or small town within easy reaching distance from the city

Village life had long fascinated me, although never before had I thought of becoming a villager—for how did the people find a living there? The commuter from the city I could understand I could understand doctor and minister and storekeeper—but how did the bulk of the villagers live? Most of them were not farmers Some, I supposed—veterans or their families—had pensions No doubt vegetables and

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chickens would go far in aiding explanation. Yet there was much to explain. How, after all, did villagers live? Did they all have little incomes or did they live on each other? All at once it had come to me that in a village lay my own salvation—salvation financial, not only, but mental and physical as well.

My very mind was pavement-sore! In body, mind, and purse I had suffered from living in brick and stone environment and in air with all the snap taken out of it through use. I realized the muscle-binding influence of rooms too small for generous life. All at once I longed for space and freedom, for acreage, for a house with a garret and a cellar, for a garden and flowers and liberty, for the wide fresh air, the sweeping wind and the sunlight. And something told me that in finding physical profit and well-being I should at the same time stand my best chance of finding mental and financial profit as well.

THE CALL OF THE OPEN

There came the vague picture of a charming town, of hills and fields and trees, of comfort and happiness, of freedom, of quiet, of having time for social acquaintance. There came vaguely the dream of a new existence. The picture grew more fascinating as it grew more clear.

I had so often decided and acted swiftly for others that it would be only fair to do so for ourselves. My mind was so busy with possibilities and with pictures of our new future that by the time I reached home I was in a glow of enthusiasm for it all. My wife saw at once that there was something important

"Our lease is up in two weeks," I said—rather abruptly, it now seems to me

"Yes—"

Then I went on and, in a few words of impetuous enthusiasm, pictured our new life as I had already come to visualize it, and even as I talked it all became more and more vivid, more and more feasible,

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more practicable. The fire of enthusiasm caught my wife's fancy also, and blazed up as brightly as with me and I saw that beneath it all she was feeling a deep sense of relief

"There'll be no trouble about the packing," she said, and, looking back at it, I think there was something humorous in that kind of approval. It was a time for stilted heroics, of set phrases, and neither of us was living up to the opportunity! Neither of us was saying anything "noble"! And it was only after a while that I even remembered to say that I had the blue envelope. "Oh yes! I understood—and I am very glad."

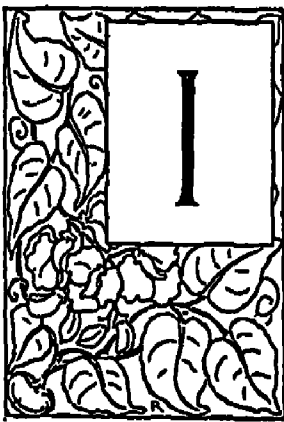
That was all. What had so long hung over us, black and threatening, had all at once lost its gloomy look. All at once it appeared in its right aspect. It was not a portent—it was a token of good luck! And both of us instinctively took it so in our ready acceptance of it as something essentially fortunate.

THE CALL OF THE OPEN

And so, thus simply, was the momentous decision mutually made, although it must necessarily involve the changing of our entire course of life, at a time when I was over forty and my wife was thirty-five

V

THE FINDING OF PARADISE



I was fortunate that we did not busy ourselves with thinking up doubtful points, that we did not antiphonally conjure difficulties. We merely looked on the general plan as a good thing to attempt, and we knew each other so well that we could work in harmony.

After deciding upon it we talked far into the night. We must find a place near enough to the city for either of us to run in for a day's business or shopping; and yet it must be outside of the expensive commuting zone. My ideas were vague as to just what I should do to earn money, but we were sure

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that we were to have a garden and orchard and poultry-yard, and were thus to raise the principal necessities of life ourselves. Could we do it and still have time, as villagers seemed to have, for sitting on our porch or chatting in a neighborly way over the fence?

At least one need not earn much money if he is not going to spend much money. Cut down the outgo and the income loses much of its importance. I remembered the mountaineers of the Southern mountains, among whom I had once lived for some weeks to get material for a series of moonshiner articles, and I remembered that, although they had scarcely any money, they were independent, for they got fuel and food from their forests and their little vegetable patches, and in their cabins the very cloth for their clothes was woven. Now I certainly had no desire to be a Southern mountaineer, but I did realize that they had a great deal of the vital philosophy of life

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With most city people the idea of making a living in the country means not becoming an actual farmer and growing wheat and corn for the market, but growing vegetables and chickens and turkeys and pigeons and selling them to the city. Variants of the general dream include the selling of special pats of butter at special prices, and special eggs, each one marked and guaranteed, at fancy prices to some hotelkeeper or confiding friend, but I had not in me—or at least felt sure I had not—the spirit and ability and desire to do this with success. I could not picture myself selling chickens and eggs and making a living by it. I could not picture myself going to either hotelkeeper or friend, though I very well knew that there could be no disgrace in it. It was only that I felt a repugnance to the idea, no matter how unreasonable that may have been. In short, I suppose I was unpractical. I was going to grow things for ourselves and find a way of making some money besides,

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and I hoped it would be a good many things, but all the growing, all the raising of vegetables and chickens, was to be for ourselves, as a basis for our new life, and I must find some other way of making some necessary money

First of all, we must get our home, and for economy's sake we ought to find it within the two weeks

I wrote to country postmasters and talked with real-estate men who handled country property. With my wife, or alone, I made swift trips to various points and drove or walked through the country seeking the ideal place. The amount of territory we covered within ten days was surprising. It was a generally mild spell of January weather, but if there came a blustering day my wife stayed at home and worked at packing up for we began our packing before we found our new home.

I went to all sorts of places and had all sorts of experiences. I knew it was of the

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utmost importance to choose the proper location; and that proper location, for me, must include proper price. I remember meeting one man, who, after boasting of his locality, exclaimed "Just try to buy any of these hilltops and see what prices you'll find!" Whereupon, glancing at the succession of barenesses, I said: "And how many have been sold lately?"—which simple question punctured his tiresome talk. I remember the man who wanted to sell an old place for \$10,000 just because his new place had cost that sum, and "all building material had gone up." One place was offered me for \$2,200. "Last year, sir, this was held at \$8,000"—but progress hadn't progressed there, and the grass had closed in on the paths, and neighbors had looted the peony beds, and the place stood unsold and empty.

As one of us was of American and the other of English ancestry, we were both determined to settle in a neighborhood of Eng-

THE FINDING OF PARADISE

lish-speaking people, and therefore wasted no time in places where we saw foreign faces at the windows, or Italian wattlings around the little gardens, or the muddy porches and untidy front doors of the newly arrived Huns and Vandals who have been permitted to seize upon many of the charming old houses. With the kind of future neighbors we were looking for there is ingrained belief in the essential merits of white paint, green shutters, green grass, and a pleasant garden.

I found some really remarkable values for bargains are always to be found by the man who seeks, but they were not bargains for me. I soon learned to understand how individual needs, ideas, fancies, possibilities, must necessarily differ.

Now and then we came upon some ideal place that had been bought within a few years, and which would have exactly suited us in location and price; and such a find was always a pleasure, it was not a dis-

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couragement just because some one else had seized upon what we could have used, but a distinct encouragement, for it showed that what we were looking for was possible to find

Quite promptly, after busily searching by day and eagerly talking things over by night, we fixed upon the general region in which we must locate, and this necessarily included the interesting decision as to which of three States, New York, New Jersey, or Connecticut, was to be given our allegiance. From that time our task was simplified, and within our chosen region we began a closer canvass—almost a house-to-house canvass. But still the precise place was hard to find—the place that would precisely be our Promised Land. I stood on many a Nebo looking for it, and at night, returning home, found my shoes edged with mud in red or gray or yellow or green or brown—very different from the plain black mud of the city.

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My pockets were full of time-tables, for I always wanted to see if train service was good, and was even more anxious to avoid one of those lines that, around every great city, are beginning to neglect passengers for freight or to cut down on local trains for the sake of through expresses "Fifty trains a day pass through the station" sounds alluring, but how many stop? And I looked for trolleys, or the promise of them, for a live trolley might make up for a moribund railway

Together, we constantly looked for signs of progress we wanted to avoid any district, no matter how charming the present appearance of its homes, that was threatened with decline And there were such things as roads and water and schools and swamps and the nearness of factories and mills

It may seem as if we must have been rather particular, considering what little capital we were ready to put in, but that

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would be looking at only half of it. What we were considering was, that we were ready to put in all of our capital and all of our lives, and surely that was reason sufficient for critical inquiry and caution.

And I always thought of the structural strength of any particular house that interested me. From one owner who challenged me to test his house I learned how to try the joists of an old building by a sort of static shake of my weight from the knees. Trembling joists and rotting sills may lurk under good-looking exteriors, and are serious things to find in your house, for they cost money to change.

But I was never discouraged by such things as musty smells (if not mysterious), bricked-in fireplaces, shabby and ill-chosen wall-paper, pale-blue or magenta wood-work. On the contrary, I welcomed them, for their depressing effect tended toward low prices, and they could be easily corrected should we take possession. With

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my small capital I could not hope for some absolutely trim and tasteful house in perfect repair, with a lawn and well-painted outbuildings. I never knocked at a faded and weather-beaten green door without thinking what three sheets of sandpaper and a twenty-cent can of paint could do to it. I knew my wife could do magic in the interior of any house, given time and paper and paint. And we were both in a state of mind that called for work. A spick-and-span place I really believe would have been a grievance to us. Our energies needed the safety-valve of what the good old Yankee phraseology calls "fixing up."

One day, by good fortune, I met the secretary of a banking house in one of the larger suburban towns. Part of the business of the bank was the selling and renting of property for minors, estates, or individuals; and the secretary, to whom I was quite frank as to my ideas and who entered

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with interest into the matter, told me of two or three properties that seemed to fit pretty well. One of them, indeed, proved to fit precisely.

The house was in a sleepy old town, about forty miles from the city. I found it to be a sort of run-to-seed town, precariously on the edge of dilapidation; yet it still had a fine air of distinction, with its long lines of gigantic elms and oaks, its ancient houses, its fields fenced with stone.

The particular house—the house—was old-fashioned, with quaintly high-pitched roof, and had nine rooms. It had a side wing, with a porch in front of it, and was set in the midst of black-boled locust-trees—very picturesque trees that had grown up by themselves instead of having been formally planted; they had a sort of natural engirdling, encircling, protecting look. They were a decided asset of the place, and, “I do love those trees!” exclaimed my wife impulsively.

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Here I may say that my wife became another woman from the moment of the decision to change. It meant new life to her—a life full of interest and ambitions. In the city, living, as we had lived and as the majority of city people live, without freedom of social life and without freedom of financial expenditure, she had perforce been cabined, cribbed, confined, her activities, her interests, her opportunities, had perforce been restricted. But now all was different. She had become transformed into a woman of verve and ideas, alert, eager, keenly interested in every possibility, absorbed in all that the new life might mean.

The pioneer feeling was in both of us. A sort of imaginative coonskin-cap was on our heads. And pioneers are not old at forty! They stay young, like Daniel Boone, till they are over seventy!

The town was in two parts—the new, which had grown up near the railway sta-

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tion, and the old, quite a distance away, and these parts were united by a scattering string of houses, some new and some old. The town was thus practically nothing but one long street that rambled gently on, with a babbling stream hemming in one side of it and a line of gently rising hills hemming in the other. For two miles the houses were scatteringly strung out, and our house was near the farther end of the string.

There were thirteen acres with the place that we had chosen, sweeping back to a line of hills. I did not want so much land as that, but I could rent the house and land together for the tempting sum of only eight dollars a month if I should assume the cost of the interior repairs of the house and should be reasonable as to repairs of the exterior.

"The estate is in such shape that the bank can't spend money on the place," the secretary had told me frankly, "and we'd rather rent it and get something out of it than let the house just fall to pieces."

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It seemed an ideal opportunity—and it really was. Friends have said to me since “But you ought not to point it out as an argument to others, for it was just the one place!”

“And just one place was all I wanted,” I would reply

There is always the “one place.” Go out and look with energy and confidence and you will find the place that is fitted for your needs, just as we found the place that was fitted for our own needs. Somewhere there is always “just the one place.”

Only eight dollars a month for Paradise! But I wanted more than to rent it, I wanted to own it, so the bank gave me an option to buy for the sum of three thousand dollars.

Small though the sum was, it would be much cheaper to continue to rent than it would be to purchase, but that was not by any means all of the question. There were possibilities in the place; there seemed good chances for increase of value; and if we

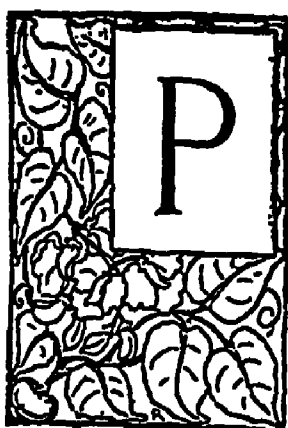
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should buy we should have all the profit of the advance if it should come. On the whole, it promised to be the safest kind of speculation

But meanwhile we would rent for a time and feel our way We should at least make it a year's relief and vacation—a year's relaxation At the end of a year of renting, out there in the country, we should probably be just as well off financially as if I had stayed in the city and struggled on under city expenses, with a decreasing amount of work and the heartbreak of going from paper to paper with breaks in employment And in health our gain ought to be immeasurable. It would renew our youth.

VI

THE FLITTING



PACKING took only a day or two, and we did all of it ourselves. We wrapped the dishes and glassware in linen and packed them in sugar-barrels. The tables had their tops padded with rugs and were then sewed up in burlap. We boxed and baled and hammered and tied. The pictures were wrapped in bedclothes and laid, one upon the other, in boxes—this being a difficult part of the packing to do without danger of breakage. Throughout we economized with crating, doing as little as possible of this and therefore sending some of the furniture merely wrapped in

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burlap and padded with paper but not packed, judging that to repair a broken chair-leg, for example, would cost less than to crate a chair—and remembering that the breakage, after all, would be not at all certain, but that the cost of the crating would be! When the packing was all done our backs were aching and stiff from unwonted bending, and our arms were tired, and our fingers had acquired splinters, but we were happy and triumphant

Everything was to be sent up that we cared for, but, as is always the case when a moving-time comes, there were certain pieces of furniture, and a few pictures, that really seemed no longer to represent our taste, and these undesirables were sent to an auction-room, where they surprised us by fetching quite fair prices. I remember that we gaily took the opportunity to send, among other things, an oak cupboard that had bored us for years. It might easily have sold for fifteen cents; but, as a matter

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of fact, it sold for fifteen dollars—such being the delightful uncertainty of auctioning

Keeping our best things, the furniture and rugs in which we felt pride, meant that we were to face the world from just as good a plane as before. That there was to be less of actual money did not mean that there was to be deterioration in ourselves. We were going to live a simpler life, but not a life of any lower standards in essentials.

I spent some four dollars on books on gardening and poultry-raising and seven dollars for tools—spade, hoe, hammer, chisel, saw, hatchet, screw-driver, and so on. Such things I knew I should need, and so dependent on the janitor had I, like other city men, become that the only tool of any kind, little or big, in our apartment was a tack-hammer!

I remember that we felt rather proud of our final arrangements for moving. The house in the country was scrubbed and

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cleaned ready for us by a woman of the village who worked by the day. A cooking-range of the twenty-dollar type and some pipe had been shipped out and set in place in the kitchen—such a necessity being unknown in the city, where every apartment has its stationary range. Our furniture was sent by freight the day before we ourselves left, our trunks, well filled, were to be checked as baggage. Some things were to be sent by express on the very last morning—bed, mattress, pillows and bedding, a lamp, tea-kettle and coffee-pot, a few cups and plates; and a supply of food, packed by our grocer, who, saying that he was sorry to lose old customers, put up in a wooden box my wife's order of coffee, butter, bread, ham, sugar, rice, breakfast food, and cheese. We were doubtful—and, as it proved, with reason—of the resources of the village store.

I made a special request at the express office, the evening before, to send early for

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our things, so we were up early in the morning, nailing and bundling the final things to have them ready. I hoped to have them reach our new home that same day, so that we could go right in and begin to live there, but if they should not arrive on time we could merely go for a night to the village inn. However, the express company's wagon called about half-past seven, and the goods went out on the same train that we ourselves did.

I saw to it that I had a few necessities—such as matches, a candle, and an extra door-bolt—in my pockets, and into a grip, after the final packing, I put the screw-driver, the hammer, and some nails, so as to be ready for needs and emergencies. All at once I was having to do things for myself!

I remember so well the experiences of that day—in particular our entrance into the village with which thenceforth we were to be identified. We felt like Columbus and Robinson Crusoe rolled into one—or,

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rather, into two. We had all the feeling of settlers striking into a new world and we felt a delightful sense of adventure

Up the long street of the attenuated town we drove, in the back seat of the mud-spattered wagon that was locally called the "stage", and behind us came a farm-wagon carrying trunks and packages. It was noontime, and from one of the houses there came the pungent odor of frying ham and ever since then the smell of ham recalls instantly and vividly the memory of that drive

The sky was bright. It was late in January and we had feared bad weather, but the entire month thus far had averaged unwontedly pleasant, with but little cold. The air had a frosty zest. A light snow had fallen and had melted on roofs and roadway but lay white on the fields and hills. It was a day for living

The news that we were coming that day—the "new folks from the city"—had sifted

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along the entire two miles, and here and there I noticed a face curiously peering out at us. The "passing" was the current event of each day. The people had seen us in our preliminary visits, but this was different. For ourselves, we could hardly realize that only two weeks before I had been worrying in the city as a city man and looking at the future as at a blank wall! But at last we had found the opening in the wall!

The house was full of a cool mustiness, but I soon had roaring fires in the range and in two of the fireplaces. In the afternoon the woman was coming in to help, and we were not sorry that we had an hour or two to ourselves, to get acquainted with each other in our new home and get acquainted with the house itself.

We sat joyously down to our first meal. We were light-heartedly happy; and that the meal was a hasty "snack," set out on top of one of the boxes, with two other

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boxes as chairs, only made it the more enjoyable. As we were laughing and talking and eating there was a knock at the door. There stood a very small and very prim and very neat little girl, with very big eyes very wide open in eager curiosity, who lifted up toward me a plate heaped high with fresh-baked ginger cookies "Please, sir, with mother's compliments, sir; and she hopes you will both be very happy here" All of which was exceedingly auspicious and left—like the cookies themselves—a pleasant taste.

VII

GETTING STARTED



It was late that night before we were ready for sleep—not late according to our lifetime standards, but late by the standards of the village, for it was after midnight and the village had long since gone to bed.

Before going to bed ourselves we went out on the porch and walked up and down the garden path in the soft glow of a waning moon. In the city one never knows whether the moon is shining or not!

To us the scene was full of magic. Here and there the gleaming water showed; beside us trees stood stately and tall; the

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houses along the village street were outlined in lines of dignity and grace, and our own home—for already we knew that we must try to make it really our own—took on unsurpassed beauty in that mystic light. The line of hills had new dignity, and to us it seemed that our own hill—for our acreage ran back to the hillcrest—was the most noble and the most beautiful of all; that, in fact, it was really distinguished in its small way. We were learning that there can be dignity and impressiveness with mere hills and not only with mountains.

The intense silence was a revelation to us; so charming and peaceful was it all that we wondered how we had lived for so many years with the idea that one cannot be happy away from the clang and clatter, the din and uproar of the city.

Without either of us noticing it, we found ourselves walking hand in hand, like young lovers instead of a married couple of over fifteen years' standing, and in that way we

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strolled on into the old orchard and then back to the house. Now this is not in the least a sentimental narrative, and if I say we kissed each other out there in the moonlight, laughing at the idea of the sleeping villagers seeing us, I say it only to set down that in that way, and without words, we made a pact to spare no labor of hand or brain to hold for our own this place where peace was.

Next day we began our learning of the many things in which the country differs from the city. Marketing was a matter of problems. The village store had only what might be called rough necessities. There was no bakery, things of this sort must come from a distance or be home-made. Meat could be bought from a wagon that came twice a week, or could be purchased in the city, with express charges added. We were outside of the territory of wagon delivery from the city, but groceries and many other things were shipped free by

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freight if the order was for five dollars or more, but even then there was the matter of hauling heavy packages for the two miles. This last, which would have been an annoying item, was taken care of on that first day of village life.

The man who ran the stage also did carting and hauling for the countryside for miles around. A tall, capable, lank Yankee he was, whom I may call Lem Hadley—a man of about thirty-five, a bachelor and a character. Somehow one finds more queer characters, queer individualities, in the country than in the city. The more open and untrammelled life develops and encourages individuality. In the city men and women are more cut to measure and to certain ways of life by the conventions; outwardly, at least, there is much of conformity, whereas in the country one's natural or acquired idiosyncrasies are permitted to have free course so long as they do not offend against certain broad and general limitations.

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Lem Hadley, having bought and outfitted a house five or six years before, in anticipation of his marriage, kept on living in the house although the engagement had been broken off. He had become a recluse, but not a misanthrope. His loneliness and disappointment must, indeed, have added a certain sweetness to his nature, for every child in the place loved him. Who the woman was that he was to have married was still an insoluble village puzzle. It was positively tantalizing! For, as Lem had never been known to visit outside of the circle of his hauling activity, the woman who disappointed him must, therefore, be living somewhere within a radius of a few miles from the village, yet so quietly had the courtship been carried on that no one could even make a reasonable guess as to her identity! And as Lem had confided in no one during his courtship, so he said not a word afterward about his disappointment.

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The furniture was really expensive, in the best plush taste! Lem had saved some money and had spent it freely for his home; and now he lived there, a bachelor, cooking his own meals, living in the kitchen and sleeping in a little adjoining room, leaving most of the house deserted—except in fruit season, when, for he owned a fine pear orchard and vineyard, he laid out his fruit, for picking and sorting, on rough benches built across his best rooms. But of course I did not come to know these things until some time afterward.

When I looked Hadley up to ask him what I was to pay him for carrying ourselves and our belongings he said, with an odd sort of slow frankness, that he didn't really know just what to charge, as the goods had been hauled by one of his men and he hadn't had time to check up the time-slips. "I'm all behind on accounts and letter-writing," he said apologetically.

Something in his manner, some dim sug-

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gestion of need, caused me to say "Is it a temporary condition or is it so right along?"

"Right along and getting worse I guess I ought not to try to do quite so much business "

Here was assuredly a hot iron to strike "Why not arrange with me to do your letters—I've got a typewriter to do them on—and a good deal of your books and bills and accounts?" I said "We could arrange, I think, to balance my work with your hauling for me and perhaps plowing my garden, or whatever else may turn up "

He looked at me for a moment "Glad to!" he said "I've often thought of arranging with somebody, but in the first place I didn't see anybody that could help me, and in the second place I couldn't see how I could add to my Saturday-night list "

After that it was just a matter of arranging details His letters and bookkeeping and bills, that seemed so formidable to him, were easily handled Years before I had

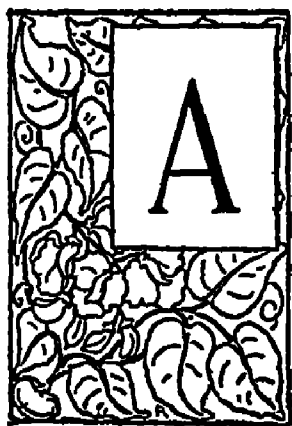
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picked up the general principles of book-keeping—they are very simple and can be learned in a few hours—and therefore I knew how to post and balance and run double-entry accounts.

The arrangement with Hadley meant much to me: it meant one way of avoiding money-spending, and, to anticipate, the arrangement within some weeks was working most satisfactorily to both of us. I did more and more for him, because he really came to lean upon me, and in exchange there was not only his stage-carrying, but also the bringing up of any shipments from the city stores, plowing and harrowing my garden and fields and furnishing our daily supply of milk. Gradually there worked out still further developments, but at the very first I secured from him on the account a rooster and two hens, so as to make a prompt starting of the poultry-yard.

VIII

THE THEORY OF IT ALL



AND now I shall set down the exact theory of the beginning of our new life, as we planned it. It all seemed so feasible and practicable! It seemed, theoretically, so simple and obvious that we wondered why we had not thought of it and acted upon it long before.

At the very base of it all was the determination, forced upon us by necessity, to keep expenditures down to the minimum. We were not to spend a dollar if it could be avoided; we were to grow our own vegetables and chickens, and after a while should probably keep a cow and thus have milk

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and butter and cream; in some way yet to be discovered I was to earn enough money for such small expenditures as should be actually necessary, and we would let these expenditures increase only as earnings should increase.

We had estimated before the actual day of moving that two hundred and fifty dollars ought to cover our total cash expenditure for one year; and in making this estimate we had figured on the necessary meat and coal and tea and coffee and sundries, and the eight dollars a month rent. It was odd to plan deliberately the spending of less money in a year than we had grown accustomed to spend in a month and to feel at the same time that we should continue to face the world with no diminution of proper pride

The sum we started with, when we were actually in our new home, was a little over eight hundred dollars. If our figures were correct we could live on it for three years,

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even if I should not be able meanwhile to earn a single dollar, and then, if the plan should turn out to be a failure, and it should be necessary to give it up and go back to the bitter struggle of the city, we should at least go back with health and strength so improved by perfect air and outdoor life that we should be not three years older but three years younger. Thus, at the worst, it would only be like going back after three years' ideal outing—only, we were determined that it should be more than an outing, for we were ready to work and struggle for our freedom.

Among the best of our assets we both possessed the possibilities of a sort of cheerful optimism; it had lain rather dormant and quiescent through the recent years, but now we realized its possession and its potentialities. Indeed, optimism is in almost every one and may only be waiting to be brought out, in which case it would be very foolish to draw out pessimism instead

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Our life and experiences, somewhat out of the ordinary run as they have been, have taught us the practical value of some truths like that. Trite and self-evident and uncontradicted, I presume such things are, and yet most people don't seem to let them have practical influence on their lives.

Well, we had the makings of optimism, and were ready to let it develop; and having optimism does not properly mean the under-rating of difficulties when they appear, nor does it mean the lessening of effort. We had unity and harmony of feeling, and were ready to work for each other. We had basic health, and should soon throw off the effects of the wearying struggle of the city. And we still had the precious possession of enthusiasm! We were still ready to enjoy ourselves with freedom and verve; still ready, in spite of the shadow of middle-age, to put earnestness into our play and gaiety into our work; we had never permitted ourselves the fatal conceit of being blasé;

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our imaginations were still active and we were eager to enter upon the new experiences that we dimly saw in front of us

That we had little money did not now seriously worry us That we had a fair amount of good furniture was a decided asset, for furniture nowadays is one of the expensive items of home-making That each of us had a good supply of clothes on hand was another thing in our favor, for it would minimize our spending in that direction Our household linen and table equipment were good for years to come

Such general uncertainty as there was in regard to plans and income would probably, in itself, have been desperately disquieting to a man of regular salary who all his life had known precisely what to expect on pay-day; but that feature of it did not disturb me as, like most near-professional or professional men, my earnings had varied not only from week to week but from day to day. And it really ought not so to dis-

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turb any one as to make him hesitate about aiming at liberty. Most men who make worth-while success do it in the face of uncertainties of one kind or another; in fact, they take advantage of the uncertainties and get on by means of them. It is a risk to give up a salary; but there may easily be more risk in trying to hold on to it. If the man doesn't give up the salary the salary may give up the man! And it may give him up after tantalizingly holding him in the city till he is really too old or too broken to get away

The whole thing seemed, soberly, not only attractive, but feasible. Necessarily, it was but a general plan that we went over at the beginning, a sort of paper-and-ink plan, and in the matter of money-spending we were to meet with some surprises, among them that the item of "sundries" became much larger than was dreamed of when we made advance estimates when sitting at the table in our city apartment, for the

THE THEORY OF IT ALL

constant and unavoidable dribble of small items mounted quickly to unexpected totals But on the whole we found that in case of actual necessity our first figuring was not so very far away Perhaps what we thought would, if necessary, last for three years without being added to would really have lasted for only about two Although right here it comes to me that no two people would precisely agree as to the practical meaning of the word "necessary" I have known of people in the country who, under the compulsion of necessity, have lived, and made a good showing to the world, on even less than the sum that we, inexperienced as we were, could not get along on

But this is anticipation The important thing was, there in the beginning of our village life, that at length we were to begin to work for ourselves In the city a man works hard just to pay rent and bills How one wakes every morning with the worry of it when the rent is overdue! Then, how

A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

positively appalling it is, after coming home with say a hundred and fifty dollars, to find that, when rent is paid, and the gas bill, bread bill, ice bill, butcher's bill, you are down to small change within twenty-four hours, with the tailor still to be reckoned with! We were trying to emancipate ourselves from city slavery

IX

A NEIGHBOR



FROM the first we were made acquainted with neighborliness—that charming thing so unknown to the average dweller in cities. We never forgot that first plate of cookies!—and that was but the beginning of friendly helpfulness.

On the third day of our village life Hadley drove up to the house and came lumbering up the path with a big, oval sheet-iron thing clasped in his arms.

“Wood-stove,” he said briefly as I hurried out to meet and help him, and then “I noticed you folks have been sort of expect-

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ing to keep warm with fireplaces Had this in a room I'm not using," he added.

"Thank you, that's awfully thoughtful of you," I said, thinking of all I had ever heard of the healthfulness of open fires and remembering how charming we found it to sit in front of a flickering blaze "I think we did expect to keep warm with open fires, and I suppose that's absurd."

"Well," he said judicially, as if trying to give my idea as much courteous consideration as possible, "an open fire's all right in warm weather!"

I so strongly felt his good will and so fully believed in his knowledge of conditions that I did not question or protest, it was simply another thing learned

"Base-burners or wood-stoves," he said, "is the only way " Furnaces in the cellar were still unknown there, or at least unused The only system that any of the villagers had adopted, as we came to learn later, for the heating of any room from a fire not

A NEIGHBOR

actually within it, was the primitive one of running a stove-pipe through the floor and into and across an up-stairs bedroom. But at the time of Hadley's advent with the wood-stove we were certainly astonished by his "base-burners or wood-stoves is the only way."

"And now, which room are you going to sit in most of the time?" he continued.

I showed him, my wife by this time looking on and, like myself, acquiescent. To be perfectly frank, our backs had been pretty chilly the evening before.

"And where's the fire-board?"

"What's that?"

"Why, a board to fit in there—close it up."

I didn't know where such a thing was, whereupon, remarking that it must be in the garret, he went up there, and in a few moments returned with it. It consisted of a few boards cleated together as one, of just the size to fill the open space of the

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fireplace, and it had a hole for a stove-pipe

"There's boards up there for your other fireplaces if you want 'em," said Hadley, as he fitted this in place. He helped me put the stove in position and then went back to his wagon for a few lengths of pipe. "Nothing like a wood-stove in cold weather," he said. "Plenty of wood, haven't you?"

Yes, we had that at least

Now, this interested me greatly, and, for one thing, I was interested to realize that I had time to be interested. It was not only the friendly help of a friendly neighbor, it was the fact that, instead of having to rush off to work for somebody else and busy myself with his affairs, without time to stay and talk with a man who had walked in with a wood-stove in his arms, there I was, looking on with keenest pleasure at the installation of the unexpected heating system! In the city I should have had no time to get acquainted

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with a Hadley even had he appeared; and that he was a man exceedingly well worth knowing points out again the shortcomings of the city

The air was growing colder even as we talked. The sun was setting, lusterless and dull, in a murk of cloud. "I'll build your first fire!" said Hadley. Surely he was becoming a sort of benevolent household deity, cut and fashioned to the New England measure rather than from ancient models. It was good to see his swift cleverness. He put in some paper and a few bits of kindling. "But paper alone would almost do it," he said. On these he laid three logs, two parallel and a little apart, and the third on top of them, not crisscross but lying in the same direction, thus leaving a triangular air-space between the three. It was positively scientific, this woodcraft, fire-woodcraft, Hadley was surely the Watts of fire-builders. He touched a match, and in a few moments everything was

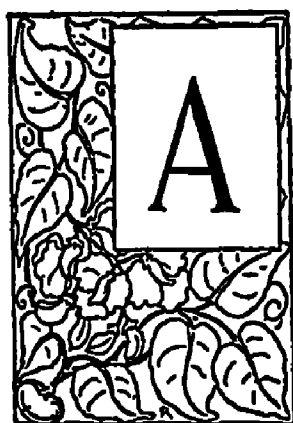
A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

ablaze; and it was a fire that needed no care or rearranging, as one built in ordinary crisscross way would have done, for the wood burned evenly and the top piece settled gradually down instead of burning through the middle and leaving two untouched ends

For a while we sat and talked together; then, after showing me how to make the fire bigger ("And it's going to be cold," he put in parenthetically), and how to leave the fire so as to have it keep burning for the longest time ("You don't want it to go out on you more than once on a cold night"), Hadley, with a cheery good-night, went out into the early darkness, leaving us cozy and snug, with our face-burning, draft-throbbing, and very effective stove

X

THE NIGHT OF THE STORM



DREARY wind was rising and I felt a sort of sinking discouragement as I looked at the wilderness of boxes in the hall and dining-room, and the barrels of dishes that seemed so endless to begin with. For all at once the work of settling down seemed discouraging and endless. There were still many pictures waiting to be hung, there were still piles of books and dishes on the floor, the trunks were still in the hall, there was everywhere a pervasive impression of disorder and bur-lap. There were no gas-lights or electrics to turn on—just the lamp in the kitchen and

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our old student lamp. It had seemed quite a triumph to get oil and an oil-can bought and in the house, but now suddenly the disadvantages of oil-lighting became annoyingly apparent

But I knew that this despondency, this sudden dolefulness, must largely be owing to the depressing effect of the storm so dourly imminent, and so I put the downheartedness resolutely aside. I glanced at my wife, and it seemed to me that she too had begun to feel the saddening influence so apt to come with a falling barometer in time of difficulty, but she smiled at me so brightly and with so much of charming encouragement that I felt ashamed that I, the man of the house, had even for a moment let myself be downcast

The noon meal had come close to exhausting the last of our city bread, and had entirely exhausted some of the other things, and so I went to the store for a replenishing of necessities. As I walked home

THE NIGHT OF THE STORM

the wind was blowing stronger and more chill

Darkness fell and a stinging cold crept out from it I plied the stove with fuel We ate our dinner together and then looked out again at the night It was darker and gloomier than before, there was no temptation to walk in the garden to-night! By eight o'clock it was snowing An hour later the wind was coming with a grisly roar. So thick was the snow that I could no longer see the glimmer of lights in the village windows

The cold became piercing, it was a stinging, deadly cold, such as neither of us had ever experienced

Our lives had been the lives of city dwellers and we had gone out into the cold and snow only when well bundled up—with a warm house to go from and return to Now it was bitter cold to go even into the hall, bitter cold to go into any of the other rooms except the kitchen and the room of our

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wood-stove; and in the hall I noticed that fine snow was filtering in under the door and sifting in long lines down the boards

The roaring of the wind increased; it became a tempest; the sound of the wind shrieking against our house and the increased cold were almost appalling. The storm seemed to be striking at all sides of the house at once; it was not, as we had come to think of storms in the closely built city, a matter of coming at the front of the house or else at the back. Windows and shutters were sharply rattling. There began to be something terrible about it.

Yet it did not make us feel more lonely and depressed. We listened with a sort of awe, and almost with dread, yet it somehow drew us closer together and made us feel more ready to meet either storm of wind or storm of life.

I remembered our rooster and two hens and feared that they would not be warm enough in the old chicken-house, where

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windows and siding were shattered; so out into the storm I plunged, found the three fowls huddled miserably in a corner and carried them to the house and down to a packing-box in the cellar

I now saw that I should need more wood. There was some in the cellar, but I had had no idea of how rapidly that stove would eat it up, so out into the storm again I went, feeling my way to a pile of wood, and trip after trip I made, carrying armful after armful, with my wife, shawl-wrapped, waiting just inside of the closed door and opening it instantly at my call and then shutting it again. Most of the wood needed chopping to length, so it had to follow the chickens to the cellar—and there I did my first wood-chopping since boyhood. The cold grew more intense. It fell far below zero and still the terrific wind continued.

I went up to the bedroom and found that it was too terribly cold for sleeping. Cold bedrooms had always been a hobby of ours,

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with wide-open windows even in winter-time; but an open-windowed room in a steam-heated house, even with the steam shut off, is a vastly different story from going up-stairs through a zero hall to a zero room that cracked with frost as you entered it. There was nothing for it but to forget one's traditions and carry the bed downstairs and set it up in the sitting-room. I gathered up the rugs, too, from the several rooms through which we had scattered them, and laid them all, one on top of another, on the floor of that one room, for we were realizing how cold it was underfoot—another of the experiences that our life in the city had not taught us.

The warm area grew more and more circumscribed. The cold seemed a sentient force persistently driving us closer and closer to the fire. There began to be something horrible about it.

Suddenly there came a crashing of glass. It was in the next room, and hurrying in,

THE NIGHT OF THE STORM

I found that one of the solid wooden shutters had come loose from its fastening and had been flung against the window, through which the storm was now rushing. I tried to close it from the inside, but a few moments told me the futility of it. There was nothing for it but to go out-of-doors, mount upon a chair and capture and fasten the shutter, which was flinging itself fiercely, time and again, at the broken window. It was a hard task, for the snow swirled furiously by me and the wind was so fierce as to make it almost impossible to keep my foothold on the chair; and the cold was fiercely keen. In the city I had not imagined what cold there could be in these neighboring hills.

A crash up-stairs—another window to close in with its wooden shutters; but fortunately in this case I could do it from the inside.

For over three hours I had to go from window to window fastening and bolting

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doubtful shutters After each window-fixing it was imperative that I warm myself beside the wood-fire. From time to time wood from the packing-boxes was used for fuel, but only a little of this, as the boxes and crates were mostly to be taken to the garret and stored for some future possibility of change.

It was after midnight before we felt settled and safe and ready for sleep Looking out I saw a faint brightening, just the merest suggestion of light, and I knew that the pale and waning moon was up behind the rushing clouds, but the rising of the moon made no lessening of the storm

We drew embers to the stove door and made some toast; then went to bed and to sleep, with all the feelings of the besieged We were imprisoned by a storm; but we were provisioned—we had fuel—we were barricaded What matter, then, to us how the night behaved, what matter how the north wind raved! A feeling of profound

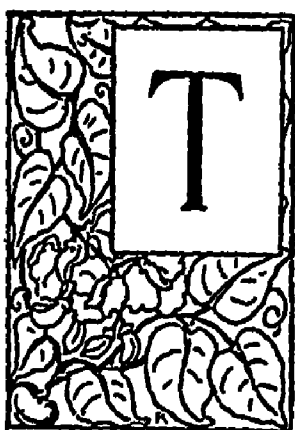
THE NIGHT OF THE STORM

thankfulness came to us; thankfulness for the feeling of shelter, of homelikeness, of protection from trouble and danger, that came as we sat close together and listened to the shouting storm

We went to sleep with the wind still roaring furiously, hurling itself at the house and making it quiver and rock, and with the snow driving by in swirling clouds and piling in huge drifts, but we felt that we had triumphed. It was another good omen; and people in straits, even though far from being superstitious, are always glad to meet with good omens! It was another good omen, for, as my wife murmured when the house shook under another blast, if we could stand this and be superior to it we ought to be superior to anything

XI

SUBJECTS OF ENVY



WO or three times in the course of the night I got up and put wood on the fire to keep it going, and each time the wind was still roaring with that terrible, hungry roar. Early in the morning—it seemed very early to me, a newspaper man, for it was a little after seven!—I got up and built the fire anew, for it had gone quite out, and I soon had the first chill off the room.

The wind was a trifle less strong, and the snow was falling even more heavily. The house was in semi-darkness, not only because of the clouds and the falling snow

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and the early winter hour, but because the windows were heavily frosted and most of the lower panes were banked with narrow drifts rising from the sills

I went into the kitchen, built the fire and soon had water boiling. It was fortunate that we had any water at all, even as it was I had to break thick ice in the bucket. Our supply was a well, and at the beginning of the storm I had filled what buckets and vessels I could for a reserve. That the bread was frozen—something we had never even heard of!—was a distinctly pioneer touch.

I opened the hall door to look out, and a mass of snow that had drifted door-high fell inside and in a moment was swept by the wind the length of the hall. It was with difficulty that I got the door shut again; but before shutting it I saw that everywhere were mighty drifts and that through the thick-falling snow it was difficult to pick out dimly the outlines of even the nearest house.

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All my life paths had been cleared for me. It was good for me to have to go out and clear my own. All my life I had found bread and milk on the doorstep or on the dumb-waiter. It was good for me to learn that there were other ways of getting food.

My wife was now up and dressed and had come out into the hall after me. She would have been up earlier had I not positively insisted that this getting up, with the thermometer below zero, in an icy house, was man's work, and she must stay in bed till there were fires going. Together we set about getting breakfast. This kind of life is like camping out, and there comes ordinarily to be no regarding of the lines that custom has drawn as to woman's work and man's work, for they merge into each other in mutual helpfulness. I may as well say here, too, that it is surprising how much of one's days, with both man and woman, is expended on the mere matter of chores of one kind or another. There are a host of

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things to do when a house is assumed of which the apartment dweller knows nothing whatever.

It was well toward noon before we could get over huddling our shoulders. It was really a misery of cold—only, we did not let ourselves take it as a misery, but only as a new and pioneer-like experience. I carried the bed back up-stairs. There was the temptation of sitting down beside it to eat breakfast, but we both realized the danger of letting down our standards. To carry it down again at night, if need should again be, would be a different matter.

The bed back in the bedroom, we sat down cheerfully and had scarcely more than begun our breakfast when there came a knock at the front door. It was Hadley, who with great difficulty had come wading through the huge drifts to inquire solicitously how we were getting on and if he could do anything for us. He sat down with us and took a cup of hot coffee.

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"You certainly are comfy," he said

"Thanks to you and your wood-stove!" I replied

"Well, open fires certainly have their drorbacks," he said sententiously and with a twinkle

Although we faced it bravely and found our mutual profit in it, there was very real hardship in the experience and a very great deal of inconvenience; but we permitted nobody but ourselves to know it. From the first we tacitly agreed to keep our struggles from the knowledge of any but ourselves, and thus is the first time they have been told. Yes; those first days were hard for both of us, and particularly so for my wife, but she did not say a single word of complaint.

And I think that complaint does not come readily to people who are trying very hard to do something that they want very much to do. Complaint is thought and spoken and permitted to darken one's outlook only when the mind isn't jumping forward, isn't



“WELL, OPEN FIRES CERTAINLY HAVE THEIR DRORBACKS”

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keenly on edge for progress That the house was cold gave us a sense of triumph instead of defeat; we felt oddly like boasting instead of complaining, for although we were meeting with severe experiences we felt from the first that we were conquering them

During the continuance of that cold spell we learned to shut out ill fortune and shut in happiness We ate early, so that we could enjoy long and cozy evenings Each of us had sat down in the best restaurants in our time, but we had never put into our mouths such toothsome tastiness as came with our little feasts of coffee and eggs and bacon

With the lamp, the fire, books, some red apples from the storekeeper's own cellar, some tea and buttered toast—toast made on a fork over a bed of embers—we didn't want to know that midnight was approaching, for we had never known anything like the pleasure of this isolation and companion-

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ship. The last look out into the sharp, cold air and up to the glimmering stars!—it made us look forward with cheery anticipation to the coming day.

It was a record blizzard that had come upon us as an introduction to village life so heavy was the snow even on the levels, and so great were the huge drifts, that it was not a case for the ordinary road work of the township roadmaster and his snow-plow. Much more than that was needed, and so all the men of the countryside turned out, with oxen and horses and snow-plows and shovels, and, divided into different parties, went vigorously at the work of opening the roads. The rich, the well-to-do, and the poor, men and boys, did their part, *pro bono publico*, with true democratic energy; and I remember in particular the rather ridiculous appearance of the richest man of the vicinity, for he had wrapped around his neck an 1860 muffler four yards long and was shoveling alongside of his own

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negro man! It was all so good and simple; it was another lesson on the benefits of getting out where life is more obvious and natural; we all wanted the roads opened, all needed the roads opened—and the entire community turned in to do the work in the most simple and natural way.

Not only were the roads blocked for wagons for two days, but for one full day trains did not run, and there was consequently not even mail for those who waded their way to the combined post-office and store. From almost every family some one floundered down there, for in the country the daily mail looms strangely large. Men go to the post-office every day as if in the observance of a religious rite, even though letters seldom come to them. On my own first visit through the deep snow I found, with his sharp nose poked into the little square inquiry hole, a doddering little septuagenarian who, so the postmaster confided to me, had made his way there for no

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other purpose than to ask for mail, although in the last three years he had received not a single letter and only one postal card. For my own part, I grew to have a sympathy with the old fellow's standpoint as I came to realize what a human want is represented by the post-office window. Like the others, I got in the way of going every day, though it was seldom I had a letter, as neither my wife nor I had given our address to many of our friends, nor did we care to write freely to even the few who knew where we were. We might feel more like writing after a while, but for the present my mail-box was largely filled with advertising circulars forwarded from my city address; and I have seen villagers look at my morning pile, apparently of letters, with positive hunger.

The first mail out after the blockade carried three letters from me that represented my first effort to find a way to earn money. I had run over possibilities, had made guarded inquiries of Hadley and the

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postmaster, and had tried to make out what men with business capacity were already doing thereabouts. From the first I knew that it would be useless for me to attempt to make a living out of farming alone, even if I had wanted to. No greater mistake can be made by a man who has failed to find success in the city than to plunge into farming as a livelihood on the theory that anybody can make things grow! That there is a great measure of truth in it, and that any man, with care and labor and common sense, can make enough things grow to reduce expenses materially, should never be taken as a proof that farming as a real business can be taken up casually, without training or experience, without knowledge of crops and markets and soils.

But there were a few men in the village or not far from it who had already found how to make money outside of farming, though they were still using their land as a basis-producer. There was the county com-

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missioner; and this pointed out the possibilities of politics. There was the road-master; not so much money in this, and also political. There was the man who drove the mail to and from the station to several towns off the line of the railway. There was the storekeeper, he didn't seem particularly well-to-do, but made, I think, a fairly comfortable living, though not nearly so much as could have been made with more earnest and business-like management; but in any case he was a fixture, having lived all his life in the town, like his father and grandfather before him. There was the doctor, a shrewd, pleasant, likable man, ready to respond to calls at any hour and in any weather. And there was the rector. There were also some who were living on their incomes, descendants of old-established families, most of these, with here and there some one who had retired with a competence or had sold a farm and come into the village to live.

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Somehow there was nothing very suggestive for me, nothing that inspired me with ideas for my own particular case, in what any of the men of the vicinity were doing, and so I tried to discover the idea of something quite different and untouched, and by great good fortune thought of the possibility of handling wire-fencing. There had been little fencing done in the vicinity, except to some extent with rails, and, very much more, with stone, it being a stony region, whose fields must have been heart-breaking to the men who in early days had cleared them and built the numberless walls with the picked-up rocks, little and big.

In the rare cases in which a farmer had ordered wire-fencing, so I learned, he had merely sent his inquiry and order to the county-seat or the near-by city.

Clearly, here was at least the possibility of something for me, so I wrote to three wire-fence manufacturers, offering to act as agent for selling their product in my vicin-

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ity I thought also of selling agricultural implements, but decided that, although I could quickly learn the necessary facts about fencing, I should not, at least for a long time to come, know enough of practical farming to make a success with the elaborate machines of present-day agriculture

The first mail that arrived after the snow blockade brought letters from our relatives, to whom our change of address had been communicated before we left the city

“And so you have retired to a charming place in the country!” wrote a rich brother Everybody, it seemed to me, had been getting rich except myself! “And so you have retired to the country! There is nothing I so much desire as to be able to imitate you. Lucky man! Only men like you are fortunate enough to get at the real secret of life I wish I had money enough to go and do likewise I have always understood that there is nothing on earth to equal the lot of the literary man in the country. I am glad

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you are so well off financially. Now, if you were like me and had to work hard every day and had no chance to enjoy such delightful leisure as you are going to have it would be a mighty different matter.

“But there are a few things you should be sure and see to Be sure and examine all the plumbing, drains, sinks, and cesspools Pour essence of peppermint in the cesspool and one hour after sniff at each wash-basin and bath-tub to find out if all the traps are in good order In matters of health you cannot be too careful ”

That it was possible that there was neither bath-tub nor sink nor running water did not occur to him As a matter of fact there was a good well near the house, and back on the hillside an excellent spring from which water could, without any great expense, be piped to the house and furnish running water there; but that was a thing for the prosperous future.

“So you are actually giving up your

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apartment and going into the country!" wrote my wife's sister. "Put all your furniture in a storage warehouse and do run down to my favorite hotel in Florida. Later, now that you are foot-free, you can run up to the White Mountains. Storage will not cost you over fifteen dollars a month—and how lovely it will be to be independent! How I envy you!"

Envy us!—that, I remember, was the strong note of most communications then and thereafter from relatives and friends. I ought to feel grateful that both my wife and myself possess some degree of humor, for it saved us from feeling any great bitterness; and we certainly did not wish anybody to pity us.

The extreme cold lasted for a week—for all that time the thermometer did not once, even in the middle of the day, mark above zero; and for that week we got on with the wood-stove and cooking-range. All the fireplaces were boarded in, not to be opened

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till spring, for, even though they were in closed rooms, each was sucking away too much of the heat of the house

I was more and more astonished by the amount of time required for chores—the time demanded for doing the necessary things around the place; and I was to be astonished still more as time went on. For the work involved in the care of petty things about a house and land in the country is very great at any time of the year. In cold weather the chores are different from those of warm weather, but always they are many. The theory, of course, is that it is best to hire work done, while the owner goes on and earns more money than he pays out, but that may be a very poor theory for a man with a doubtful and limited income, for he will often find it necessary to spend hours of every day upon work that he would gladly have some one else do. It may seem foolish to spend hours of toil instead of paying out two dollars—but it

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isn't always convenient to pay out the two dollars

On the fourth day of the cold weather the postmaster asked me if I did not care to go fishing; there was to be a party of three or four men, he said, and they would like me to go along

Till now my ideas of fishing had altogether been associated with a hot sun and a broad-brimmed hat and a spot by a river's bank; but the winter idea appealed to me and I at once accepted Each man was to take his lunch.

We went to a lake some three miles away. We built fires We cut holes through the ice The fish—bass and pickerel—were delightfully hungry. We hauled them in rapidly At noon we gathered about a roaring fire to eat and talk As night came on the fish were divided equally Eight beauties were my share, and for some days they gave us delicious eating, for we had them broiled and fried and planked For

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this last, I planed a thick oak board, to the great amusement of both my wife and myself, for we saw the cheerful oddity of the contrast between all this and our life in the city. In fact, I could hardly recognize myself as the same man.

Cold storage for the fish was no problem at that time of year, the favorite storage-place being a basket which I had slung out from the kitchen window with cord and pulley in imitation of one I had seen at a neighbor's. I might mention, too, that no one thereabouts locked up very particularly, indoors wasn't very much safer than out, for I think that most of the windows in town could have been shaken open. The favorite place for a key was under the doormat! Yet there was seldom a theft, seldom even a tramp in the town. The place had won a reputation for severity to law-breakers, and this reputation must have been taken well to heart by the dangerous classes, who have their own channels for the

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effective transmission and dissemination of intelligence.

That day of fishing was my introduction to the fact that one's very recreations may be of very practical value; that time spent in fishing and hunting and roaming the hills need not be apologetically explained to the conscience. For the first time I realized that sport could mean to the modern man just what it meant to primitive man—both pleasure and food! Later I was to learn that there is a good deal of this sort of thing. I was to learn, for example, that the rabbit season is more than excitement and slaughter; that it means change of meat, and days when the butcher need not be thought of. Even the squirrels, attractive little things though they are, invited profitable destruction when they tantalizingly attacked my pear-tree, for they did not frankly eat, but ringed and tossed down pear after pear, making hunting a necessity and a virtue

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and furnishing forth many a squirrel stew, and there is an epicurean dish of mushrooms and squirrel meat, simmered with an onion, that is delectably savory when prepared by my wife according to the recipe of an Adirondack guide given on a vacation of years ago. And for the mushrooms—in spring and fall, but particularly in the fall, the old pastures around our new home were studded with them. No one else in the village had any interest in them, either to be eaten fresh or saved in salt for the winter. In blackberry season berry-picking was a joy, and yet was not waste time, for it was the accepted custom of the countryside to go out over the hills and fields, with no regard to private ownership, picking great luscious berries that grew in clumped bushes in many a field of rocky undesirability, giving not only daily fruit and jam but cellared treasure besides.

But meanwhile I was thinking mainly of business. The few hours of work that in

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the early period of our arrangement I spent each week for Hadley did not keep me from looking closely for some other possible opening, and I soon found that there was at least one class of steady work open to me—if I were only willing to take it!

XII

ONE WAY OF EARNING A LIVING



HAT I found was that a man can readily earn a living in a country town, at least in a country town not far from a great city, if he is willing to work for others at shoveling, digging, repairing, general laboring, jobbing. There is sure to be room for such a man, often there is room for two or three. Any day in the year, with hoe or hammer, with willingness and a fair degree of skill with his hands, a man can go out and earn a dollar and a half. It is almost pathetic to see how people long for and seek for men to shovel snow, dig the garden, plant seeds,

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trench celery, mend the porch floor, tack up curtains, gather fruit. I have seen even the town vagabond implored to help, and have known him to respond like a tyrant bestowing a favor. I have seen a pious deaconess piloting a drunken man to her vegetable patch. No man with arms and a willingness to use them need complain of inability to make a living. It is the modern version of "arms and the man."

Many a solitary woman, and many a household of women, give up the vegetable garden in midsummer to grass and weeds or let it dwindle to the negligible proportions of a bed of radishes or lettuce at the kitchen door, because, at least not without much of weariness in seeking and finding and imploring, no man can be hired to care for it—and many a household in the country and in villages is a household of women. Husbands and fathers die, the sons migrate to the cities; and laboring men cannot readily be found to take their places.

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Country dwellers turn to canned corn, canned peas, canned pumpkin for pies, canned milk, and canned cream. Condensed milk is a great staple of every country store!—and this to quite an extent is because of the responsibility of owning one's own cow, which looks at the owner in pathetic misery if not regularly milked, and the inability of many a household to get a dependable man to do the milking. The village ice-cream was made of condensed milk!

The rows of canned goods in country stores and the myriad empty cans in the ditches are a revelation to the city man who thinks the country devoted to fresh milk and fresh vegetables, but it is hard to find the man who will milk (the milkmaid is an extinct species) and the man with the hoe

Although the most obvious need is for garden-workers, there is also a constant general need for men to work at all sorts of tasks of jobbing and repairing about the

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buildings—the sort of work that can be done by a handy man who is skilly but not skilled .

However, from all this I felt barred. I was ready to work my hardest for my wife and myself I was ready to dig, paint, plaster, chop, lift, carry I was ready to toil and moil, early and late, for ourselves and our home; but I was not ready to put myself in the class of doing ordinary laboring work for others.

At first thought, it may seem that I was wrong, that I was undemocratic, actuated by false pride. But I was in the right, and am very glad that from the very first I saw it in that way.

Theoretically, all men are equal, and no man loses esteem by any kind of honest toil. But as a matter of plain fact, we have to pay attention to the social standards of those among whom we live and whom we wish to count as friends I had to consider, for my wife and myself, that we

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wished to be thought well of by the people of our own tastes, our habits of thought, we wished to retain our right to equality with the better class of the countryside—and the better class, in country or city, will not sit down at dinner with you if you have been taking their money for digging their potatoes or polishing their kitchen range

I hope that I should not have hesitated about doing any kind of work rather than ask favors or accept ruin, but I hadn't yet got down to that; I was still independent, although by such a slender margin, and wished to keep both independence and pride

It is quite possible for a man to leave a humble past behind him and, rising to a higher plane, be the equal or superior of those he meets there. Once, in the old days, when I was with a group of newspaper men who were interviewing a famous financier, one of the reporters said—not from mere rudeness but from curiosity

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to hear what the great man would say "Were you not a day laborer when you were a young man?" And I remember the chillingly superior reply "Yes; but I did not remain a laborer."

It seems to me that a man owes it to himself, to his wife, and to his children if he has given himself that delightful but expensive indulgence, to retain what our wise forefathers called "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" The opinion of mankind is that a man may rise from a lower level to a higher and be none the worse for his previous modest condition, but that he may not sink to a lower without distinct loss of consideration, and we did not wish to sacrifice consideration, for with it would be sacrificed the chance of consorting with people of our own tastes And we had to consider not only those of the village, where there were some really delightful people, but were looking ahead to the time when, should everything go as we

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hoped, we should also be able to have friendly acquaintance with interesting people within quite a radius, who were well-bred, and educated, and in touch with the affairs of the world. Some of these country-dwellers are cosmopolitan in mind, in contrast to most city-dwellers, who are merely metropolitanly planned.

There was another thing. In the house or in our garden we were not only ready to work and to work hard, but we were ready to put on old clothes to save our better ones. Country life is very hard on clothes and shoes if one does any work about the place himself. I did not in the least care if a neighbor saw me working in an old coat, but on all occasions when we were to meet people as callers, or go out on the highroad, even if merely to the post-office, we were both of us determined to be properly dressed. We had no objections whatever to looking like mujiks in our own garden, out of public sight, but did not in the least

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agree with Tolstoi that working on one's own place in the fields means necessarily looking like mujiks and wearing weird blouses all the time!

And there was something still more important than this matter of clothes. It was, that although we were ready to economize and did at times almost fiercely economize, we never let ourselves fall into careless table ways, or sit or eat in the kitchen, or wash-up on the back porch, although it would have been very easy and almost natural to have done so in the bustle and makeshifts of our new life.

After all, it is by paying attention to such things as these that one keeps up his self-respect. To lower oneself in one's own eyes is but preparatory to lowering oneself in the eyes of others.

There was no effort at pretense. Neither of us said our work was exercise or that we were doing it for our health. We tried to live in an ordinary way and merely did not

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talk of our affairs. The village was informed, through the medium of the woman who did our washing, that we were "all right"; her test—a test which she had long since succeeded in impressing upon the entire countryside—being that of pillowcases. If unmarked, the owner might or might not be rich, but was certainly of no particular account. If marked with "India-rink," as she called it, the wife could be a good housekeeper, but that was about all that could be said. But if embroidered with a monogram the owner was "all right"—and here again the judgment was quite regardless of wealth.

As a matter of fact, and a pleasant fact, the standards of the countryside had nothing to do with wealth. Ancestry meant a good deal, but even so there was ancestry and ancestry. There were people who traced their genealogy back to Revolutionary officers and lawmakers; there were people who traced back to private soldiers

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in the Revolutionary ranks, and between the two classes there was just as great a gulf fixed socially as existed when their ancestors fought under the American George against the English one

In our own case I came to understand long afterward that the people, from the first, decided that we had very little actual wealth; and this from the fact, as we ought to have understood at the time, that we moved out from the city in midwinter

That my wife and I did not talk of our affairs, that we did not ask for credit at the store, that we did not poke into the business of other people—these things made us the subject of tantalized curiosity. So far as I remember I did not even mention what my city occupation had been, and likely enough my neighbors do not know it even yet, which makes me feel a little more sure of my anonymity in writing all this. It was not that I was in the slightest degree ashamed, but merely that it seemed un-

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necessary to talk about my own concerns; and so the village merely gathered that, whatever had been my occupation in the city, I had given it up to come out here and live. There was nothing mysterious to them about my reticence, it was merely and mildly tantalizing. Besides, there was the saving grace of the monogram!

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XIII

MAKING MY FIRST MONEY



ADLEY, between whom and myself there was from the first a mutual liking, found his liking confirmed by the fact that, as he expressed it to the postmaster, who told it to the village parliament, through one of whose members it finally made its way to me, I was the only man in town, except himself, who did not take people into his confidence about his affairs

Answers came from two of the fence men within a few days. One curtly said that his company was already represented in that neighborhood. The other man, though intimating that this was similarly the case

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with him, did not quite say so, but went out of his way to more than hint that in selecting agents the company must always be sure it was not taking men who had turned to this work because of having failed at something else. This was basically so right, from the company's standpoint, that I could not feel either anger or resentment. The third man did not answer at all.

I felt that I still had a chance with the second, and at once wrote again, explaining in regard to myself more fully than in my first letter. I explained that I was a man of city training and experience who had come to the country to live, for this, I knew, could cause no surprise in these modern days of increased country living; and that my experience had accustomed me to meet all sorts and conditions of men, which ought surely to be a qualification for saleswork. And, after all, I concluded, should they wish me to become their agent, there would be no money coming to me.

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except as commissions on sales actually made.

Even then the matter hung fire for a while and there was more correspondence before it was settled, but within two months I was their accredited agent, at fifteen per cent commission, and had in my possession samples of fence material, full instructions as to how to construct the fences, and so on. I was able to secure a workable quantity of fencing knowledge with a day or two of close application and study, it was far from a comprehensive knowledge, but it was enough to let me talk with fair understanding of prices and sizes, of heights and mesh and weight, of freight rates, of construction. It was just enough to let me begin.

I soon learned to expect a lot of unexpected questions, but it was all a matter of keeping cool and meeting them. Among the puzzles there was the eternal and surprising one that an acre is not always the

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same so far as fencing is concerned—that is to say, an acre or ten acres in one shape does not take the same amount of fencing as an acre or ten acres in other shapes. And there were other discoveries equally puzzling.

A general shortage of money in the countryside was a primary condition and seemed to be the principal reason for not putting up even needed fencing. A general shortage of money among men who were in a position to sell food to millions! I have not even yet come to a full understanding of the economic side of all this, but I am sure that it is a condition so needless as to be positively grotesque. There must be fine financial possibilities in dairy and vegetable farming in the vicinity of great cities; it needs only the combination of farming knowledge with somewhat of business skill.

Lack of money was not the only reason for not putting up fences, even where badly needed. I was a little surprised by the

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refusal of a well-to-do farmer to buy, for there were bad sections in his fencing near the railroad track; but a sardonic neighbor pointed out that worthless stock, permitted to break through and wander in front of a fast express, is likely to be paid for by a railroad at anything but a worthless price. Another man told me that he might have bought if his wife had lived, for she had constantly been urging him toward better fencing. "She was my sixth," he said gloomily. "She was a great hand to work, could dig almost as well as a man! But I don't more'n get a woman fair bruk in than she ups and dies. I do have the darnedest luck with women!"

My first sale was to an Italian truck-farmer; and I sold him a little bill of fifteen dollars, from which I had for myself the princely remuneration of two dollars and twenty-five cents when the entire deal was completed. Still, I felt proud, absurdly proud, small though the sum was and far as

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it was from representing my actual outlay in expenses up to that time, for it was my first sale and showed me that I could do it. In this case I went out and showed the man how to build the fence, staying right with him until it was done and explaining how to make firm the corner-posts and gate-posts with braces of wood and of wire, and how to twist the bracing wires into a hard cable, under good tension. I wanted my first job to make a perfect showing, and I also wanted the personal experience of the work.

I remember so well the day on which I made that two dollars and a quarter, for it meant so much to me. I do not mean in the amount of money itself, but in what it represented in change of money standards. It was an absurdly small sum when compared with my earnings in the past, but it not only represented the beginning of something new, but—and this was the vital point—it was in itself a full lecture on practical financial philosophy. For I under-

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stood in practice, for the first time in my life, that the value of money does not lie in its amount but in what it will buy, something that I had often read of as being true but which had never before come to me as a truth to be practically realized. Whereas, as a first and obvious example, two dollars and twenty-five cents would barely have paid for a single day of my city rent, it would pay rent here for more than a week!

The stone fencing of the countryside—those stone walls that crisscrossed so endlessly and which represented such enormous labor when the land was first cleared of the material that made them—were, many if not most of them, crumbling and falling, and there were no longer men thereabouts who could either build or rebuild what is technically known as a dry wall. The walls were either allowed to continue their crumbling, or were inefficiently repaired, or, in a few cases, were rebuilt at great expense by

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skilled masons fetched from a distance And, anyhow, the stone walls had never made the best kind of fencing, because few of them were high enough to keep in a determined cow or a vaulting horse!

But to introduce wire-fencing was by no means easy It was what is termed a conservative neighborhood, that is to say, it hesitated about adopting anything better than father had used An improvement was only a doubtful innovation Still, I was glad of this, for had it been a progressive and up-to-date region I could not have got my foothold there for such absurdly little money as I was spending And now it was merely up to me to show these people the advantages of my point of view—regarding fencing, now, and perhaps other things later. And although it was hard to get well started with my new business, there was a minor part of it with which I soon began to have success—that of gates For I was able to convince a number of

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owners that, even though they might be right in clinging to their walls, they ought at least to put in capable wire gates to take the place of clumsy bars

And through working and planning and thinking as to getting capable modern fencing put up, in place of stone walls, there came to me an idea that I was able, later, to make of value; in fact, there were really two ideas, and both of them were in regard to advantageous use of these tumbling-down walls

The first was, that as soon as good macadam road building should begin hereabouts, with the general growth and development that I was anticipating, I could buy many of these stone walls at a bargain. The owners of the farms, so I believed, would be glad to dispose of the stone, and make an agreement for wire-fencing in place of it, not only because the walls were in bad shape and were really too low, but because in many cases they did not run where they

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were wanted for present-day needs, and also because they were wasteful of land in taking up altogether too much ground space, as the country had originally been so full of stone that the walls were not only walls but long lines of gathered stone, built wide.

After buying the stone and selling the fencing, or making advantageous trade of the one for the other, my plan was to turn around and sell the stone to road contractors for macadamizing

The second idea was somewhat similar. It was to sell the picturesquely weathered stone from the walls, as the country should grow up, to house builders, who would need just that kind of stone for foundations and likely enough for entire houses.

However, both of these ideas were for the future alone, and I mention them to show that there are always opportunities to discover and plan for. The immediate need for stone for either of these two pur-

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poses had not arisen, and I had no capital to put into stone to hold and store for perhaps a couple of years or more.

For the present I could only make direct sales, and every fence that was put up I looked upon both as a demonstration and as an advertisement. During the first year I made a total of only sixty-three dollars and fifty cents in fence commissions; but the second year I made one hundred and forty dollars

For these sums I worked very hard. I spared no pains to master the various problems I made myself able to show a man how he would profit by dividing a field into fenced parts, letting one entire section grow undisturbed while another was grazed I also looked up neglected fields that for want of fencing had been allowed to lapse into waste and become covered with weeds and blackberry briars Now and then I obtained quite an order from some estate manager or absentee owner to care for such fields; and from my profits, small as the

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total was, I had to deduct the time and expense of some trips to the city

The agricultural department of the State was then going through a period of special activity and was sending out lecturers to deliver free talks on various agricultural subjects at such points as made application. I saw to it that an application sufficiently warm went from our town, and when the experts came their talks were well attended by the progressive-minded for miles around, and I was thus put in touch with many a large landowner. As the agricultural lecturers advocated everything fenced, from chicken-runs to cow-pastures, my own interests were also thus furthered.

I found, however, that I could not live by fencing alone, it could only be by fencing combined with something else—but in setting down this summary of two years' fence work I am getting a long distance ahead of my general story and must go back to the early days.

XIV

BREAKING OURSELVES IN



ONE thing I tried to do, shortly after I began my first efforts at fence-selling, was the handling of laborers and job-men. I knew they were wanted, and set myself to find out who wanted them and when, and then to have them on hand—I to have the margin between what was paid to me and what the men were to be paid. I got in touch with some Italians who were making a settlement at a point some miles away, and also arranged with two or three Americans; but, somehow, I only lost time and some money by it and gave it up. Perhaps at that time I was

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deficient in business skill and management, perhaps it requires a man who would work along with the laborers as foreman and would be sharp and even savage in driving them, as I have seen padrones manage gangs of Italians. At any rate, there are possibilities in it, it is undoubtedly one of the ways of earning money in the country. The fact that there is work to be done and people ready to pay for it is sufficient proof.

I came to realize another feature of it, too, and that was that many men who work in the country have poor standards of efficiency. They have never learned, the kind who are ready to do all sorts of odd jobs, what a man's work can really be. Any man going out from the city, after years spent in fierce competition with others, is far better equipped than the average country-bred laborer. The exceptional man, whether city-bred or country-bred, can always earn more than the others, at the edge of our village a man, who was always

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known as Hunkey, had taken up bachelor quarters in a squatter's cabin, and always had his time bespoken, weeks in advance, at two dollars a day, because he had strength and perseverance and could dig

I think the most noticeable thing in my new life was the stoppage of the usual weekly pay-envelope. Nothing can be stranger to a man who all his life has been accustomed to a pay-day than the stoppage of it. I do not refer to the varying amount of the income, for it varies with so many men, but to have it stop altogether, to do without it altogether, is apt to be at least mildly dismaying, at first, even to one who has made up his mind to it and who has theoretically braced himself for the shock I did not for a moment regret having begun. I reminded myself that, after all, I had lost my city income altogether and would probably have lost my next place before very long, had I looked around for a next place. And my wife and I said to each other that

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the best feature of the change was that it made us realize that we were at length working for ourselves. And I say "we," for it was literally we, my wife having ardently thrown herself, from the first, into planning and working for our new venture; she was no longer the passive, receptive, accomplish-nothing-in-particular wife of an ordinary city apartment

Another thing that may seem odd was that on my infrequent visits to the city I did not look up old friends or even go to familiar restaurants. I had nothing to be ashamed of, but I had not as yet succeeded in my new life, and therefore did not wish to talk about it with any one. Under such circumstances a man becomes so sensitive that he wants to get into a hole and draw the hole in after him.

It was odd, too, that I walked the pavements as if I were in a foreign city; it was familiar, but was no longer mine. I lunched as a visiting stranger. I went to my train,

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to start for home, with all the feeling of a transient visitor. And although I was glad that I had escaped seeing old friends, I was at the same time sorry and depressed, and was more depressed when, to the cheerful inquiry of, "Well, and whom did you see to-day?" I could only reply, "No one at all that I knew"; for I would fain have been able to talk over pleasant words and greetings with my wife

That we could not see far into the future was from the very first the saving grace of it all. Had we been able to see and realize the actual heartbreaking difficulties we should neither of us have had the courage to face them, but, as it was, we went on with cheerful bravery, meeting problems as they arose and keeping our minds and hands occupied "Foolhardy!" Of course it was—but what would the world be without successful foolhardiness!

Beginning in winter, as we did, caused us to appreciate practically that there is very

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much more in country life than the growing of vegetables and chickens. But, of course, that side of our life was to be highly important; and even while that first bitter weather was continuing we began to prepare for our campaign along those lines.

We had everything to learn. As to chickens, we studied a good chicken manual and followed what it taught. In very necessary addition, my wife acquired working knowledge from an old village woman who sold eggs. It was she who warned us of rats and weasels and cats; who taught my wife to pip the beaks of all the little newly hatched chicks; to put broods together under obliging hens after nightfall, and to diagnose the color of the hen's combs and say whether they were laying or not. Good fortune made us decide on brahmas for a breed, the first three, acquired before the blizzard, were of that kind, and it seemed best to have our yard all alike. We started with fifteen hens and two roosters, and at

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once began to have excellent results in eggs, even though it was winter-time; and with the coming of spring there were broods of little chickens. We learned later, however, that breed is not everything

In every direction there were things to learn. I remember, on one of the early days, when going out to look over the patch of raspberry and currant bushes, that a neighbor happened to wade out through the diminishing snow toward me, and I silently marveled at what seemed his almost superhuman knowledge in knowing the old canes that needed cutting out from the new ones that must remain; for in that season all stalks looked alike to me. After a while I came to marvel that there could be anybody who did not know such simple things!

Neighbors, by the way, often stopped and commented, leaning over the fence or walking out into field or orchard, and I think on the whole it was from curiosity



NEIGHBORS OFTEN STOPPED AND COMMENTED, LEANING OVER
THE FENCE

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rather more than helpfulness; but I did not resent it, for by informally talking with them I was thus able to find out a good deal without seeming to be doing so

In the course of clearing up out-of-doors I learned the delights of fagoting, something almost unknown to American farmers, common though it is in Europe. Fagoting gave me a great deal of fuel both for the kitchen and for the evening fires on the hearth, and at the same time it increased the good looks of the orchard and the place.

The fourteen apple-trees, rather old ones, that formed the orchard were in need of trimming; that was evident even to untrained eyes, and I learned, mainly from a book, the principles of the art of tree-trimming, aided as usual by local volunteer information.

Few orchards were ever cleaned up and thoroughly trimmed in this part of the country, and this explained why it was that, although it had in years gone by been a

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famous region for apples with that zippy tang that a cold climate gives, it had quite lost its prestige. And, as I was later to learn, there were still great quantities of apples grown, many of them positive beauties, though most of them went to waste and were not even gathered Baldwins and greenings and pippins, stock well chosen and at first well cared for, but now only picturesque ruins of trees from an expert point of view, still bore crops that were amazing to our simple, city, half-bushel-buying minds. Even the poorest house in town could set out a plate of red apples in winter such as only the wealthy could have in the city.

And all this made it plain that here was another of the neglected opportunities of the country. For there was certainly a future in apples for a man who would study their culture and their marketing. And how absurd to see apple crops going to waste so near the best market in the world!

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The trimming and fagoting made excellent cold-weather work, and having perforce a good deal of time, I set about pruning and trimming other trees besides those of the orchard.

How to tell good branches from bad when there were no leaves on the trees, by the sound, when struck lightly with a club, was another of the marvels that soon ceased to be a marvel. I learned, also, the fact that an apple-tree branch growing directly upward would never give fruit and should therefore be cut off. In short, I think I began to feel that inordinate pride that comes to a man who for the first time picks up knowledge that as a matter of fact he ought to have found long before.

XV

GETTING WISE ON OLD NATURE



EARLY one evening I went over to see Lem Hadley. Walking to the back door of his house—he never used the front—I noticed as I passed the window that he was asleep in his chair, the picture of weariness. I would have gone away, but he suddenly awoke and opened the door to welcome me.

“Come in,” he said, and then, surveying an attempted supper, he added ruefully, “Water’s boiled away—potatoes burned up—fire’s out—and I’m tired and hungry.”

I murmured something sympathetic, and



HE WAS ASLEEP IN HIS CHAIR, THE PICTURE OF WEARINESS

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he grinned ruefully, and I think he was really glad to have sympathy from some one he liked, although he had so absolutely shut himself away from anything like intimate communication with the village in general

He looked again at his ruined supper "Sometimes I'm so tired that I cook three suppers in a night," he confessed "Fall asleep and they burn and I cook another, you know "

I had him go back and take supper with us—we were having it somewhat later than usual that day—and then he unbosomed himself of some of his business troubles more than he had ever done before

"Trouble is, my men want to swap yarns and exchange guffaws at the barn door, or watch a cloud to see if it is going to rain I need to have more time to stay right with them If you hadn't come along and taken some of my work I'd have gone West—was planning it I like to go to the county-

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seat and do jury duty once a year, because I hear other men's troubles instead of my own—yes, I'm on the list every year; it's all chance, you know—at least they tell you so!—but just the same some men get it right along and others never do. And it makes a sort of vacation for me. Now, see here, can't you do more with me—not only letter-writing and so on, but actual making up of estimates? I can tell you prices and all that and get you started well. If you can I'll do more for you. You can have the use of a horse any time you want to drive around the country."

Nothing could have been more welcome to me than this proposal, for it eased matters greatly for me. A horse and runabout were precisely what I most needed. A man cannot do business in the country if he walks. It is practically impossible for the landowner to consider of importance the man who goes about the country on foot. In a general way, it was arranged that one

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hour of my work was to be offset by an hour of his horse or half an hour of one of his men and a team, and it worked out admirably, for we both tried to be fair and we knew we could help each other

All this—it is worth while repeating it, for it is vital—more and more showed me practically what I had early seen theoretically, that it is not the actual amount of income [that counts. With the lessening of things to pay for there was a lessening of need for money.

Even while the snow was on the ground I set about trimming the grapes, the currant bushes and the raspberries, for they had all run wild for three years in the neglect of the garden in the time of the last occupant, and as soon as the snow was off the ground I dug around their roots to free them of grass, and also reset the rhubarb—or pieplant, as I had been brought up to call it in my part of the country. I found where the rhubarb roots lay by neighborly suggestion

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that they were root-bound masses and could be located by the withered leaves of the last season, and I put some hot-bed half-barrels over some of the roots to hurry the growth of this earliest of garden sauce

I laid out the plot for the vegetable garden as soon as the snow melted, which was toward the end of February. The ground formerly used for the purpose seemed excellent, and I found it to be really so, it being a rich, sandy loam.

I saw theoretically that the smaller the garden the less would be the work in plowing, digging, planting, weeding, cultivating, hoeing, but before deciding on the exact amount of ground I carefully consulted the books and then laid out a space fifty feet by seventy-five. Besides this there was to be a space for field-corn for the chickens and another for winter potatoes, but with the exception of these two rough crops the fifty feet by seventy-five was ample. Indeed, we could have done with

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even less The best results come from small gardens

I studied seed catalogues and a garden-book before buying seeds, and carefully made up a list reaching to just a little over four dollars

Being a stranger, I included cauliflower, and only afterward learned that I was the only one in the township who was growing that delightful vegetable! I started in, also—through following the books—with successional planting to have peas, for example, not only once but frequently from early spring to late fall, and I was amazed to find that this, too, was something unpractised thereabout. Such things as this, pointing to the unprogressiveness of the farmers of the vicinity, helped me partly to understand why they were not, as a class, more prosperous

I saw to repairing the fences and made the barn floor sound and good, thus giving a good workshop until such time as the

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space should be needed for a horse, a cow, and conveyances There were many things I was ready to do around the place, for from the first I hoped to buy it.

It was surprising what a steady drain of money there was A few necessary tools, constant supplies of nails and screws, glass, rat-mesh wire, chicken wire, lime for white-wash—but such things cannot be itemized I can only say that there were times when it seemed as if the petty expenses loomed to a higher total than the steady expenses on which I had estimated

There is so much work to do in the spring there are many days of pruning, tying up, planting seed, weeding, raking, cutting grass, making chicken-houses, setting hens, making mouse-proof corn-bins, tightening hinges, making wire coops for feeding little chickens, and each day's work marks such visible progress You work late because another hour does such wonders Noon always comes too soon Evening always

GETTING WISE ON OLD NATURE

comes too soon You walk back to the house for supper, reluctant to drop the hoe from planting peas and beans, for that cloud may mean rain, and a gentle rain on new-planted seeds is so beneficent and salutary

All the work seemed so good—so immediate a way of solving difficulties Heretofore life each day had been thinking, planning, working for others—remote from the material returns of food and fish and chickens and eggs Now everything was so different!

We got it down to a system; we straightened up the little library when we left it in the evening, folding the papers, putting books and chairs in place, shaking up the pillows, tidying the hearth and drawing back the curtains for morning We tried to leave it as neat as a housemaid would have made it had one been there and up and busy early in the morning An evening-worn room is not attractive by morning light

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We went to bed very much earlier than we had been accustomed to do, for the unwonted life in the open air made a heavy sleepiness come over us as we sat by the fire; and yet, so I learned long afterward, our hours were considered uncannily late by our fellow-villagers, among whom sifted the gossipy knowledge of lights seen at midnight by some hurrying-homeward citizen extraordinarily delayed, or by some frightened goodwife who peered out on some fancied alarm of fire or of a weasel in the chicken-yard

We did not get up so early as the neighbors. It is hard to change the habits of a lifetime completely; but, anyhow, there was no use in getting up too early in the country—the dew is so heavy that more shoes and clothes are spoiled than gain made. The poet who idealized the man who was always “brushing with hasty steps the dew away” did not stop to realize the messiness of it and the material damage to

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shoes and trousers. Anyhow, evenings utilized as a time to sit and talk, or read beside a light, have a pleasantly civilizing influence. It isn't best to go to bed with the chickens. Each morning, after breakfast, the noon meal was prepared for, the table was set, potatoes and other things were prepared, ready to cook, the house was put to rights, the lamps were filled, ready for the coming night, and water and wood were brought in for the entire day. Thus we felt prepared for caller, for friend, for business—for the unexpected. Then we went forth for work in the garden and the out-of-doors—the dew gone and our minds free.

In a general way we adopted what we called a nine-o'clock morning standard. We tried to have all the little daily, fussy, minor things done by that hour, for if they were there would be a long day left clear and free for new work, work that meant a step ahead, work that meant not merely a keeping up but a moving onward, either with

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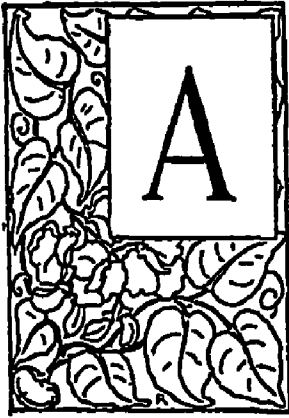
the place itself or with my new business venture

In a way, our garden was secluded; and we hoed and planted in what, except for such as came openly walking in upon us, we deemed a sort of happy solitude. But as a matter of fact the entire village knew all about our garden and everything we did. They knew how many hoes and rakes we had, that our green peas were second in town and our corn first, that we were trying cantaloupes, that we had planted too many peppers and not enough onions for village standards, that we had some queer things hitherto only known of in seed catalogues (these were endive and okra), and that we ate more lettuce than our washwoman thought good for us!

One family, patiently taking turns with a field-glass, even watched us from their perpetually occupied seats on their porch, from their house on a hill a mile away

XVI

BUYING OUR HOME



AFTER we had been in the place almost four months an important problem suddenly confronted us. The secretary of the bank wrote me that changes in the estate that owned our home rendered it necessary to sell. He said that under the circumstances I certainly ought to have the first chance. He was ready to sell for two hundred and fifty dollars less than the price he had first named to me, and a cash payment of one thousand dollars would be sufficient, leaving the rest on mortgage at five per cent. "Even in this short time, real estate out there has a slightly

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better tone," he wrote, "and I can sell to some one else at twenty-seven hundred and fifty dollars if you do not care for it; but I really hope you will take it "

The chance for a home actually our own was thus forced upon us, and it was too good a chance to lose. But there was much more than this in the situation. We had put the whole spring's work into the place, we had given freely of our best enthusiasm and energy. We had literally begun to taste the results of our toil. Already we were attached, as if by roots, in a way that a mere city dweller can never understand. And so we wished, intensely, to keep the place.

But I did not have one thousand dollars, nor could I really afford to pay out even what money I had. I could have obtained the full amount from among my relatives or those of my wife, I suppose, but neither of us wished to get the money in that way. You cannot ask money from a relative

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without explanations or apologies—and very likely, with the money, you will receive some kindly advice that will make you want to throw the money back. It is best to do everything possible yourself and then try to arrange for the balance with a bank, for you can make it a mere matter of business, and can look the banker in the eye, before and after, and feel unashamed and unapologetic.

I went to the secretary and offered to make a first payment of seven hundred dollars. He smiled and hesitated, and said something about a thousand being really a very small sum, considering the property, and that he did not quite see how he could consistently take less. Then he smiled again when I said that seven hundred down was the best that I could offer, and accepted. A great part of the business of small-town bankers is necessarily with small investors and small sums, and they know that an earnest man with a home at stake is

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a pretty safe man to loan money to on mortgage "We never worry about the people who are going to worry themselves," said the secretary "We only worry about those who don't worry "

And so the place became ours! We were no longer renters, no longer tenants with a mere potentiality of ownership We were owners We had acquired a home of our own!

And we were immensely elated, elated, in spite of having to face the fact that, instead of having money for three years of living, we all at once found ourselves the possessors of a cash capital of less than one hundred dollars—all the money we had in the world—and no way of earning more except my so far not very successful selling of wire fence Now, indeed, we were facing a very real problem, but we refused to look at it with fear, we merely determined to adjust ourselves to the new conditions We were owners of Paradise and would not be afraid!

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In the first place, our cash expenditures, already down to what had seemed the minimum, must find a minimum still smaller; we must make our actual spending still lighter than we had been doing, and should be materially helped, from now on, by having our own vegetables and fruit crops and our own eggs and some supply of broilers, for our garden was greening up beautifully and was now yielding daily returns and the chickens were laying or sitting on their second sets of eggs. Everything looked hopeful. We should be all right if we could keep our heads above water and keep out of debt.

I went at the fence possibilities more eagerly than ever, and especially because I now had the use of a horse and runabout. I got a good county road-map and planned a comprehensive presentation of my fence-selling propositions, for I should now be able to cover a wide extent of country.

This having a horse to use reminds me of

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going in and seeing the Sunday editor of my old paper—he knew me only as a successful reporter—and getting him to order a page article on the country roads and automobil-ing, which was only at the beginning of the marvelous popularity that it has since attained

The editor was enthusiastic as to the kind of life that he took for granted I must be leading “It must be great—living out there!” he said “Have you got a saddle-horse yet? If you haven’t you ought to get one right away, for there is nothing to equal the joy of horseback-riding It’s ahead of your automobile!” Whereupon I felt glad that I still looked as if I owned an automobile and could buy an occasional saddle-horse.

One of the staff artists came out to get pictures. Of course we had him to luncheon and killed for the occasion two cockerels of our own first hatching He was enthusiastic over everything He wanted to go through

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every room in the house and even the garret and cellar "I've often heard of your being out here!"—and I had been rather of the opinion that I had pulled the hole in after me and had been lost and forgotten!—"The boys often talk about you It's great! You've certainly got the right idea of life I'll never forget this chicken as long as I live!"

He was in ecstasies over everything—over our hill, our old orchard, our trees, the house itself He tried all the apples, green and ripe He gloated over the little raw carrots fresh from the ground He bubbled with enthusiasm and the right sort of envy He pointed out the view of the hills as if he had discovered it! He snuffed the delicious odor of the country and the growing things He made us see our home again as a city man sees the country, I am afraid that our hard work had begun to dull the edge of it a little for ourselves, or, more likely, it was the constant presence of anxiety—for,

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determined and confident though we were, we should have been foolish indeed not to feel some degree of anxiety as to what the future should bring forth

The artist's bubbling talk made it clear that, even if a few had ever suspected I had gone to the country from wretchedness and heartbreak, it was a few only, and they had not made their knowledge or suspicions general. All of which lightened my heart immensely. The artist got his pictures and went back to the house with me and sat talking with us in front of an open fire until the midnight train. It put me in touch with all my old friends again, removed the feeling of hiding and was a good tonic for both my wife and myself. It was precisely what we were in need of. It made everything seem brighter.

But from the time of paying out practically all of our capital we began to run desperately close to the edge as to money. Always there were unexpected expenses

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and unexpectedly large totals of little spendings. If either of us had fallen sick I don't know what we should have done; but fortune was very good to us in regard to health—and, indeed, all the conditions, except the important one of overanxiety, were for health. We lived in absolutely pure air and were too busy and too much occupied to be sick.

That first summer, when we were short of money to a degree that I do not even now like to think of—when we were at times almost desperate—was the time chosen by a number of visitors to come to see us uninvited—relatives and others at whose homes we had scarcely, if ever, slept. We wanted to be hospitable, but could not afford to be. The little breakfasts of fruit and toast and coffee for two were a delight; but for four or six they were impossible. It took all of our time, from dawn till dark, living as we did without a servant, to make the household go and entertain our visitors, without

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being able to do any work that meant material progress or money-getting. Each visitor would say, airily, "Now, don't let me interfere in any way!"—but the very situation made it impossible not to interfere, merely by their presence in the house.

And yet we could not turn the visitors away. We had a good-looking house, seemed prosperous and had to live measurably up to the part. The visitors took our time and everything else with that curious freedom that people exhibit when visiting in the country and which they never dream of offering in return when the country dwellers visit them in the city. No doubt they thought us mean because we were not more liberal livers, even though we were spending money for which, when left alone, we should have to economize so fiercely that it hurts even now to think of it.

It was almost as annoying that some of our visitors would stand on the porch and comment on the passers-by with small care

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or no care at all about their words being heard "See that one! You couldn't beat those whiskers in Denman Thompson!" I always stopped such genial manifestations of humor, but it was after the mischief was done I remember, too, a brother coming in one day and telling gleefully of how he had just been taken for me by a couple of old ladies, who had gravely bowed to him; and how he had returned the bows with a facetious face and flippant greeting, thinking it awfully funny because it was in the country I remember his surprise when I did not seem fully aware of the humor of it

It is some satisfaction to know that the villagers—who are not so obtuse and slow-witted as city people like to think—responded in kind and if anything with more cleverness A widow in the village took city boarders in summer-time, and I remember her saying one day, looking disapprovingly after an applicant she had just turned away "I never take pear-shaped people to

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board; you can't fill 'em up!" And I remember how showy summer-folk from "The Lake," a fashionable resort some three miles away, used to come in rich and unctuous state, on pleasant Sunday afternoons, to Vespers, and that the postmaster remarked one day to the leading sister-in-charge that no doubt this attendance helped the church materially, whereupon she replied, with a dry smile "Of course they're welcome; but as to the contribution plate—well, they're all of them ten-centers But they help to keep the moths out of the cushions," she added, thoughtfully.

In spite of worries, our life was happy. So delightful was the idea of ownership, so inspiring, that we dug our flower-beds and planted vines from the roadsides—Virginia creeper and wild clematis could be had for the uprooting—in a sort of ecstasy of happiness; but, unconfessed to each other, we suffered from the fear of spending money, the fear of debt at the store and the fear of

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an unprovided-for winter. Still, there were helpful conditions. In the country there are no shops that tempt you with hats and gowns, with neckties and shirts, to take the place of your growing-old ones—and that's a mighty good thing when the pocket-book's light. It really requires an effort in the country to spend money on clothes or house furnishings, demanding as it does a journey to town or an order from a catalogue or advertisement. There are no frilly sales facing you, to have a depressing effect upon your wife because her closets and drawers cannot be replenished with the latest furbelows. There is not the constant drain of street-car money. There is little need, or even opportunity, to give tips. There are no restaurants, no soda-fountains. There are no table delicacies, no cake-shops; if you want to economize you need merely refrain from sending to the city. Nor do village stores even offer candy to tempt grown-ups, and candy-hunger is

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satisfied with a holiday candy-making—while one cracks hickory-nuts on the flat-iron, the other compounds sugar and syrup on the stove, and the delectable compound, after “setting” outdoors in a pan to cool, is brought in and broken up and eaten with gusto in snacks.

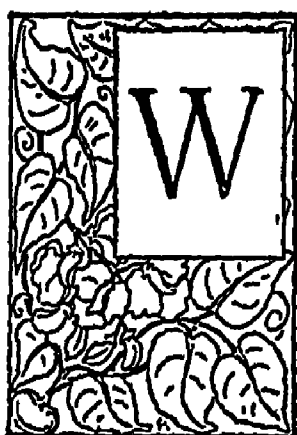
Our taste in tea, coffee, and butter did not permit of economy in quality. Our morning coffee was still the old good kind from the city, which we bought in quantity and at a lower price than the country-store “best”, but we drank it only at breakfast. The butter seemed to last in a way unheard of in our household before. As time went on we used more jelly and marmalade of home making. Outdoor life and activity seemed to call for more sugar—the doctors now call it “the power behind the blow”—and sugar at least is low in price! We never said, “Let us be careful of this or that”, but we became very careful of the necessary luxuries that called for money expenditures

BUYING OUR HOME

and very free in indulgence in all our home products. milk, berries, eggs, chickens, fruit, green peas, cantaloupes, apples Our table never seemed bare.

XVII

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER MEN



WITH the advent of summer not only was there a mild influx of summer boarders, but there was the return of sons and daughters who had gone away from their old homesteads to get out into the active world, but who loved to come back for the summer months. Some of the homesteads were houses of the village; others were fine old Colonial homes, isolated in dignity, which in years past had sent forth judges and legislators, one of the finest had been the home of a famous ambassador.

There was a distinct smartening up of

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the entire community in summer-time
There were long drives and all-day visiting, and houses were full of relatives and guests

The local weekly, published at the county-seat and read with avidity by all classes because it was full of personal notes about the neighbors (and why shouldn't one's own neighbors make the most interesting of reading!) had a perfect revel of news in summer-time, for its Meadowtown Murmurs, its Holmsville Happenings, its Jaybrook Jingles (these are not the real names, but they illustrate the type of alliterative heads used for the various towns) were no longer confined to notes of who went to the city yesterday, who was adding a wing to his barn or who had the measles, but were full of luscious items regarding the movements of the famous and the important

Everybody knew everybody else, at least by sight, for miles around Men and women were commonly identified by horse

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or conveyance, while still quite a distance away, for the appearance, age, color, gait of every horse were known, and the front-view and side-view of every runabout, carriage, and wagon "That's Doctor Fitch coming," or, "That's Jonas Smith," would be said long before the men's faces or figures were distinguishable. All the dogs of the village and vicinity were known by every resident, and it was an odd local custom—only subconsciously recognized, I think, by the villagers themselves!—that each dog had a double name. "Daly's Brute" "Tennie's Jim," "Paran's Pug," "Chase's Toddy," "Dixon's Dax" (short "a" and villageese for dachshund).

In short, it was a village of amenities, of geniality, of distinctive character and interest

Mentioning the local newspaper is reminding of a little thing I did which could have been done by any one of fair intelligence and without newspaper training. It was to

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establish relations with two of the city newspapers, one afternoon and one morning, as local correspondent. The happenings were few and the pay small, but still it was something. In any country town where there is no local paper this is one of the small openings, but where there is a country weekly the men connected with it are given preference as correspondents for the city papers. Here, the nearest paper was published at the county-seat, so there was an opening for me for local notes. It made me smile to contrast my "string" with that of my city days! But it was another thing that showed my change of necessities and standards, for I looked upon it that this small income would counterbalance some of the small outgoes, such as the cost of the daily paper, postage-stamps, writing-paper, and express charges.

My wife was anxious to increase our live possessions by some Belgian hares and some pigeons. We started with a pair of

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each, traded for settings of eggs, for our chickens were good-lookers, and we had several trades offered of small things, rose-bushes, tiger-lilies, white phlox, quaint old tables, for eggs or pullets from our yard. The hares lived in hutches on the barn wall and the pigeons were made at home in a packing-box high up in the loft, with holes in the gable. Both the hares and pigeons increased in number; and when we had five hares and eight pigeons we decided to begin eating them. We had many a savory dish from these two sources, but we never tired of them, for neither hares nor pigeons increased fast enough to give us a surfeit! They kept on multiplying fast enough to more than pay for themselves, giving us good eating, but not too much of one particular kind, and we were never faced with so much increase as to make superfluity, there was no such geometrical progression as to tempt us to go into business as raisers. In fact, it is seldom that

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the amateur gets such marvelous results as are set forth in glowing articles on the subject. At the same time, if he is willing to devote himself to raising squabs or hares or pheasants or six-weeks' ducklings—if he is willing to devote himself to it as a real and difficult business—and if he has a special aptitude for it and business skill in handling the product—there would perhaps be money success and a proportion of increase far beyond our modest successes for our own table.

I learned, not all at once but in course of time, as I watched and studied what went on about me, that there are more openings in the country for the city-bred than I had at first supposed.

I have already mentioned the laborer, the general job-man, but there are other and better possibilities, and they are not only possibilities for the city-bred man but are such as the country-bred man is generally unfitted to take advantage of.

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Set the right man down in such a country neighborhood as I have described and let him become established, either renting or owning, with a good vegetable patch, fruit and chickens, and he can make a comfortable living and continue to do this into old age. The country is ready to use a man as long as he can totter. He may go to his work leaning on a cane, but he is welcome. There is not the heartlessness of the city in throwing aside men with gray hair or a bald spot.

The best local carpenter, a man who had built and roofed the village houses for so many years that village memory ran not to the contrary, was seventy-nine "goin' on eighty and goin' some," as the village parliament that gathered nightly at the store loved to put it. He knew all about the structure of our own house. "It's all right," he said, "I put in a big new timber over yonder on the north side in '90, and found everything else sound. Somewhere

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about '97 I strengthened the porch And the shingles I put on the house twenty years ago are good for another eight or ten " Now where but in a village could you be told the repair history of your own house? What city carpenter could preserve in his head the traditions of beams and shingles?

And it was the same, as to retention in local memory, with the great lilac-bushes on our place, for a delicate, gentle-spoken, gray-clad old lady paused one day in passing, and said "My great-aunt planted those two lilacs, I thought maybe you'd like to know She lived here It was before the days of nurseries and tree agents, and she brought them home with her, wrapped in her handkerchief, in the stage-coach " And somehow those lilacs smelled sweeter and looked prettier ever after, for we thought of them planted and tended by a daughter of the house so long ago, and we looked on them as a sort of charming heritage out of the past

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Among the skilful workers who would be cordially welcomed in most communities such as this, the paperhanger looms prominent. He is usually conspicuous by his scarcity or even his entire absence. In our own village and the surrounding neighborhood the only man who could be hired always had his time bespoken two months in advance. Some work that we needed was done promptly by a city paperhanger who chanced to be visiting relatives for a few months to recover his health, and he picked up a good summer's living by doing such work as came literally knocking at his door, for he did not seek any of it

The only painter available within a radius of a good many miles, unless one sent to the county-seat or the city, which most of the people were not rich enough to do, was a retired sailor, who was puffed up with pride at being in constant demand. He was so humorously high-handed that the paint he used had not only to be secured through his

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efforts, but also whoever employed him had to pay for the paint in advance. Nor was it altogether a rare experience for a property owner to pay for the paint and then find himself compelled to wait interminably for the painter to come. And, anyhow, so lightly did the man bear the fardels of life that at any time he would infinitely prefer to win admiration by tying knots in a rope, or by demonstrating how to do necromancy with a clothes-line, than monotonously to paint the side of a house. Yet no one dared to beard him and suggest that the day was passing and that the night cometh when no man can paint, for he might have felt miffed and have left the job forever undone—he was quite equal to it.

One of the very best of opportunities, for the good not only of him who can seize it but of the entire countryside as well, is that of acting as a commission merchant and middleman between producers and city dealers. Many a carload of fine winter

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apples rots on the ground for want of handling; and many a farmer could make money out of his eggs, chickens, cherries, berries, peaches, and butter if there were a man ready to see to getting his things handled for fair prices in the city. I found that some of the women were making a little money by sending eggs and chickens for the summer trade at "The Lake"; they could and would have raised more had not the handling proposition been too much for them; and what is true of those women, in their comparatively small way, is true of many of the men. I do not mean that no produce at all is shipped away, but that, aside from the milk shipments to the city, there is nothing like the variety of things that could be produced in business-like quantities.

The country needs business men; business would grow about the energetic enterprise of a man going up there with intelligent capacity to handle both the city end and

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the country end. But I do not mean that any man can step into such work; it needs a man of thoroughly good business aptitude, capacity for hard work, and ability to meet and handle all varieties of human nature—and there are men who, in spite of the possession of just such admirable qualities, have not hit it off successfully in the cities. The country is open to them.

The most curious thing about it is that up to forty or fifty years ago there were plenty of men doing just the kinds of work I have mentioned; not only commission men, but mechanics and artisans. The movement of the best has been uninterruptedly toward the city. Those who stayed behind were mainly inefficient or weaklings. In a broader sense than is ever supposed, there could well be a movement of "back to the country." Of course I am not referring to commuters, who, though they sleep in the country, have all their business interests in the city.

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And here is another point The city man who goes to the country with daughters old enough to teach can, if they are qualified, find schools for them In the district I am speaking of, which includes a number of townships, every school-teacher had come from "upstate" The district did not even raise its own school-teachers

I did not myself take advantage of the things I have just been mentioning because I had no daughters, I was not a paper-hanger, and I had not the business experience or skill to act successfully as a commission merchant. My experience in trying to organize the labor market taught me to be shy of attempting business organization of any sort One must find the particular line that is best and most feasible for him personally.

For a time I was very strongly tempted to study law, even though I was over forty; for I saw what an admirable opening there was. Any lawyer who is drudging in a

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great city to make ends meet can find comfort in a rural community such as I am describing. I do not mean the county-seats—they have their lawyers; but I mean the small towns, and there are many such, where there is no lawyer, but where there is a constant chance to draw up deeds and contracts, make wills, give advice regarding questions that may arise, and take neighborhood cases for trial at the county-seat. With the basis of home garden and chicken-yard, a country lawyer can be not only independent but also hold a position of consideration.

“I’ll have the law on you!” is a frequent threat in the country. Grievances are nursed for years. It is surprising how many tales of lawsuits there are. Legal struggles loom large. The minds of the public are less occupied by strenuous business than is the case in the city, and every one’s injuries are brooded over and his neighbors’ troubles more talked about. “Lawyer This” and

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"Lawyer That," and what they say and think, are of constant importance

A lawyer who would go into a country village must be of a kind to impress people favorably and gain confidence; he must also have much tact—a quality curiously necessary to an outsider going into a country community, for otherwise, no matter what his character and ability, he would be frozen out. A man is talked over in a rural community in a way a city dweller knows nothing about, and he may unconsciously incur the dislike of an entire neighborhood through some relatively small thing.

A young doctor came to this very town, but found himself persistently without patients, and gave it up. He had education, skill, and a good presence, and afterward succeeded elsewhere; he never knew that here his mortal sin was putting a pig in his lot within sight of the street, an unheard-of offense in this place of trim tradition.

In spite of evident advantages, I did not

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study law, for I realized that it was not only a matter of getting an abstract knowledge of it. Even if I could devote the necessary time to it for the necessary period, and should pass the examinations, I should not be equipped; for a lawyer isolated in a country town needs far more than mere abstract knowledge; he needs, peculiarly, such a wide working knowledge of details and forms and practice as could only be acquired through previous experience among lawyers and courts. Admirable though the opportunity is for a good lawyer who has not succeeded well enough in the city, it is not the opening for a man who has never been a lawyer at all.

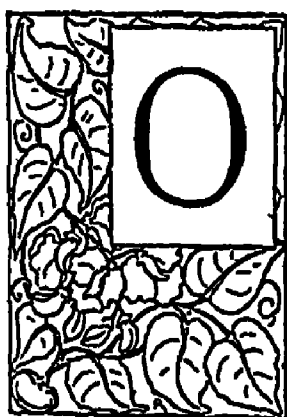
The result of all this was that I could readily see fine opportunities, but was still to find the opportunity that was best for my own case—or at least that seemed to me to fit my own case. And meanwhile, in spite of the pleasures of the countryside that we were constantly discovering, in

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spite of the growing charm of it all, and in spite of an outward appearance of prosperity that both we and our house kept up to the world, we were really in very serious straits

XVIII

THE GERM OF SUCCESS



ONE day there rode up, on horseback, a man whom we had known slightly in New York, through his having originally come from our home town in the West. He was only about fifty, and had gained great wealth. I saw by his face that he was saddened and in trouble, but he brightened as he greeted us.

"I heard of your being here," he said, looking with interest around him; "I heard your name, and thought it must be you."

He stayed about two hours, took a cup of tea with us, and was evidently soothed and rested. Several times he sighed deeply,

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but always made an immediate effort afterward toward cheerfulness

"You have discovered the real secret of life," he said, gravely, as he looked about him. "It is a beautiful way to live; you have all you need, you have beautiful surroundings, you have enough for comfort, you have—health " And I knew by the way he said this last word, with his voice dropping a little after a hesitant pause, that it was his own lack of health that had saddened him

But there was such unconscious irony in what he said "You have all you need; you have enough for comfort"!

He died four months later—he knew that death was upon him, that pleasant afternoon—and it was found that he had left his fortune to be scrambled for by distant relatives that he had barely known; whereas his money could have established hundreds of anxious families in what he deemed ideal life

THE GERM OF SUCCESS

That afternoon, as he sat there, sipping tea with us, we were both wondering what he would think could he but know that that very day I had sold, under the imperative need of money, what had long been a cherished collection

It was a collection of first editions They were not many I had had a good deal of personal enjoyment in picking them up, one at a time, when opportunity offered; but I had often told myself, truly enough, that it was not a first-class taste, as a book, if at all worth while, is worth while in its best edition, whether the first or the fiftieth, and if not intrinsically worth while it ought not to be owned in any edition I did not tell my wife in advance that I was going to sell, as I knew she would strenuously argue to keep the books from fear of the sale giving me unhappiness, but when I told her that the sale had been made, and for one hundred dollars, there was a look of positive relief on her face that was worth all the first

A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

editions ever printed And here is a queer thing I never missed them! They were essentially of false value, and in my new life I was getting right down to realities I know now that I was becoming a better judge of men and books and things through getting down toward primitive principles

It was astonishing how far that one hundred dollars tided us over Only a week's earnings in my old life—and yet here it meant the cost of living for many weeks! For our vegetables were coming up freely, our chickens were laying, so many little chicks had hatched that our total approached the hundred-mark, and we were, therefore, having many a roast and broil

I should like again to emphasize that cash was needed only to make up what was, after all, a small deficit, only it was absolutely imperative to cover that deficit I could not make my place self-supporting, it is foolish to talk of that unless a man sets out to make farming and the selling of the

THE GERM OF SUCCESS

produce his sole business, but one can make his garden and accessories so productive that the margin needed for necessities is small. As to extras, that is another matter. For the present I felt I should be more than satisfied if I could keep abreast of the necessities.

My story has been picturing us as feeling both happiness and misery, elation and depression, and that is because we really felt first one and then the other. Often, indeed, the transformation was rapid. Our life was a life of alternations of feeling caused by shifting changes in outlook and by favorable or unfavorable happenings.

It was fortunate that there was a great deal of actual work for me to do about the place, for it kept me from much of the brooding and worry that would otherwise have incapacitated me for serious mental effort. Still, a great deal of actual worry could not be avoided, and I remember with intense

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vividness my feelings when I wanted to send five dollars for an absolutely needed pair of shoes and decided that I could not afford to do it, having struck a period of keen money shortage. The definite realization that I could not afford the shoes was such a blow that it made me feel on the point of throwing up everything and going back to the city. Then I felt bluer and more despondent still when I realized that there was nothing to look forward to there. It was really a dismal outlook, but I shall not try to set down much of my thoughts. I remember how rich and sweet was the smell of the astrakhan apples as I walked downcast through the orchard and how pleasant it was to see the little chickens come bevying toward me as to their protector. I looked at the house—my own house, my home—and I caught a glimpse through a window of the white dress—

At that moment a light runabout drew up in front of the house and a well-dressed man;



"I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE DOLLARS FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF HAVING
MY MEDICINE SIGN PAINTED UP THERE FOR ONE YEAR"

THE GERM OF SUCCESS

a stranger, jumped out and walked briskly toward me

"There's a good broad gable on your barn," he said

I nodded, indifferently assentive.

He at once went on briskly. "I'll give you five dollars for the privilege of having my medicine sign painted up there for one year "

I looked at him blankly. For a moment I did not see him. I saw the pair of shoes

"Five dollars a year—and I'll keep it repainted," he said

But I could not do it. I could not let down the bars of my pride. It had become a savage pride, and it would not permit me to take all the poetry out of my place, even if it did promise an annual pair of shoes

"No," I said quietly, but I felt a queer catch in my throat

"Sure?" he continued, for he divined a doubt

"Sure," I replied

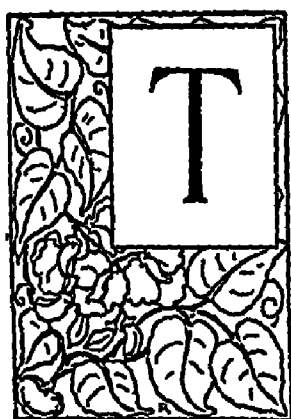
A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

“Oh, well, some like it and some don’t,” he said. His glance roamed along the street. “Who owns that place over there?”

Who did own that place over there? His question suddenly opened possibilities to me. The thought swiftly grew that herein lay the germ of my opportunity

XIX

WORKING TOWARD LIBERTY



THE house down the street, whose barn had caught the man's eye, was staidly square-fronted — a house rather bare and plain, save for a charming porch and a delicate line of cunningly wrought dentals. It had been last occupied by two maiden sisters, who had uneventfully lived out their ninety years apiece there, amid softly rustling lawn and an aroma of ancient lavender, and, learning of them, I had more than once found myself rather sentimentally wondering whether, in the simple bleakness of their lives, there had not been at least a touch of delicate romance

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Now, all at once, sentiment vanished. The practical came. This man saw a place to paint his sign. I saw more, for I saw the chance to begin to get my real foothold in life.

The property belonged to distant heirs, and I found that it was in the hands of a lawyer in the city. That very evening's mail carried a letter to him asking on what terms he would sell or rent the place, and if he would give me a commission for successful handling of it.

The answer was prompt and favorable. Two per cent if I should sell, five per cent if I should rent.

This was the kind of thing I wanted; for I had determined to be the real-estate man for that entire countryside. That was my opportunity.

Now, of course, in a sense, there was no shortage of real-estate men. Somewhere there were men ready to handle such property as was for sale, but in the entire terri-

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tory they were inactive. They had not awakened to the coming expansion.

I determined to make myself the man on the ground, the specialist for the territory, and to be ceaselessly active. I planned to get in touch, right and left, with owners and with distant agents, and to act for each class. I had located in advance of an increase of population and an uplift of prices, and felt sure both would shortly come.

To say that I made myself competent to discuss real-estate prices may sound rather simple, but I did not take the work itself simply. I set about canvassing thoroughly to find who owned land, who wished to sell, who could be induced to sell if properly approached. Naturally, those who wished to sell offered the best preliminary material for business, but there were greater possibilities with owners of special sites, who needed to be interviewed and argued with. I came to know the value of a view and felt that such a site, at a reasonable price, ought

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almost to sell itself as soon as the movement should begin, and I thereupon made myself acquainted with every view for miles around. I knew that for some time to come my work must be mostly preparatory, but I was ready to work hard in preparation.

Some houses were excellent to sell practically as they stood; other houses would need great alterations, others would need to be pulled down, some of the very best sites had no house at all but were excellent to offer for building only. As there were to be all sorts of buyers, it was well to have every variety to offer them.

I listed the properties in groups of two-hundred-acre places; one-hundred-acre places, places of fifty and twenty and ten acres. Near the town itself I was prepared to sell little more than lots. Many a rich man likes to go far off into seclusion and still keep within touch of the city, and many a commuter cares for little more land than he can put a house on.

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I made trips to the county-seat and spent hours in studying maps and records I learned about what proportion of purchase price banks would assume on mortgage I studied building and estimates to familiarize myself with cost of construction and alterations

It was not difficult to make arrangements with real-estate firms to act as their local representative and handle property for them on the basis of divided commissions, and to meet the clients they should send up, for I convinced them that I was the right kind of man to talk with people, and it was still undeveloped and inactive territory Of course my working arrangement was made with my own bank, as I called it, among the first

In getting about the country for real-estate preparatory work I kept at fence selling at the same time, and I eagerly hoped for the coming in of enough money to let me feel rather free financially, so that,

A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

on my own place, I could put up the different kinds of fencing I knew it would create almost excitement if I should fence with horse-high fencing, with hog-tight, with rabbit-and-poultry It would make not only the proper fencing for my own needs but would be an excellent demonstration and advertisement.

Real estate was very, very slow in beginning to move, but now and then came a nibble that set our hearts fluttering. But I knew that all that was needed was to get things fairly started—for one city man would bring other city men by making them wish that they, too, had a hilltop, a stream, an orchard, a never-failing spring

And after a while the current began to set in; slowly, very slowly, at first, but gradually strengthening Nothing is more curious in real estate than the quietude and sluggishness in any district until the actual movement begins Even though every one knows, theoretically, that population is

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coming, no one is willing to act practically on that knowledge. The actual arrival of a real-estate movement always comes as a surprise, even though everybody has long known it to be due.

When the movement began here the first indications were like the little cloud no bigger than a man's hand; but those first slight indications set me more busily than ever at my gathering of information. It is positively surprising how, when one is looking for information, it drops in from every quarter. Even the peripatetic butcher discoursed to me of farms for sale.

For a long time there was not what even exaggeration could call a rush of inquirers, but there was a steadily though slowly increasing interest. I was myself instrumental in quickening this by interesting city real-estate men in the district, and they began to ask, now and then, if I could find properties to answer the requirements of certain inquirers. Here was where my

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comparative tables were of value; and, in addition, I was always ready to meet any possible purchaser on any train

I made a special point of having all information not only reliable but exact. Whether I wrote to an agent or talked with a possible purchaser as I drove him over a country road, I knew precisely how many miles it was to a railway station, how many acres there were in the place under consideration, and precisely how much of the purchase price could be left on mortgage.

A great aid was photographs, and my wife found that she had a faculty of photographing old places so admirably and attractively as to draw city folks like a magnet. Her pictures gave poetry to farms, made a hill with a few cedars on it suggestive of a park, and made little ponds seem dreams of beauty; and there were really beauty and charm when the people came out looking for them.

Some of the homeseekers were rich and

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some were far from rich. Some were penurious because they were rich, that was why they had been able to acquire their riches. One white-haired city man, a very rich man, fell in love with a place on a hill about two miles from our home. I drove him up eight or nine times, and besides that he used to go up himself, to gloat alone over his intended acquisition. He made the women who lived there positively nervous by dodging in and out among the evergreens, in mutable admiration. I didn't need to point out the charms, whether of house-site or view, for he saw them all, and was specially in love with the great oaks, really monarchs—and monarchical ought to be a good adjective, for tradition said that these trees had been marked by king's foresters, in Colonial days, to be used in building ships for the king's navy in the time of the Georges. I told him of the tradition, and it added zest to his desire, and the additional legend, or history, that the great tree

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beside the road was called the Tory Oak, because its long and level branches had served for the hanging of some Tory prisoners in the grim border warfare of the Revolution, still further whetted his desire of possession. On the house itself he wasted no time, for he was to tear it down if he bought.

Finally, not accepting the price named to him, he made me an offer, an offer so small that I hated to carry it to the women who owned the place. Of course they did not accept it; but I urged them to let me know their very lowest price, as this man was really going to buy somewhere. They named a low price, but still that rich man fussed and backed and filled because, for that superb estate, which had become the apple of his eye, there was still a difference between them of two thousand dollars.

He finally bought a place in an entirely different region, it was described to me by Hadley, whom some business matter had

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taken there; it was a bare hillside and meadow—there was not a particle of shade near where he was beginning to build—and although he had set out some young trees it was certain that he would never live to see them grow up. And I marveled that such a wealthy man could refuse to treat himself to what would have been a keen satisfaction, an immense pleasure, even if there had been—which there was not—a demand from the owner for an unreasonable price. But perhaps in not being able to appreciate his standpoint I was discovering a reason why he was rich and I was not.

Some of those who came out were vague dreamers, who talked of mansions and bel-videres and garages, when a five-room cottage with a five-foot porch would have taxed their resources.

I learned to talk the necessary points, according to the character of the potential purchaser. For one with an automobile, distance from the railway was an advantage;

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but the next inquirer might need to be within hailing distance of the station. For one, seclusion was the thing; for another, I was ready to point out neighboring houses. For one, it was an old house to remodel, for another, it was a chance to build a house, spick-span new and up to date.

I arranged to be sent for at any time to answer a long-distance telephone call. A telephone was too expensive a luxury for me to have in my own house as yet. The store had, in fact, the only telephone in town. It was the custom for the grocer or his boy, when any one was called for, to walk leisurely to the store door and bawl the name down the street; and, if there was no reply, to walk leisurely back and declare that "the party isn't in." I offered a twenty-five-cent tip to the boy for getting me whenever I was called, and it worked like magic; for that quarter of a dollar would, if the boy was absent delivering goods, turn out the village prune-and-cracker eaters, lock



IT WAS THE CUSTOM FOR THE GROCER TO BAWL THE
NAME DOWN THE STREET

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the front door, and fetch the grocer himself to my house. When I gave him the twenty-five cents "for the boy," he knew, and I knew, and I knew that he knew that I knew, that it was for himself.

In summarizing all this I am necessarily looking far ahead in my story. Even the first sale and first commission did not come until after a time of weary waiting and tremendously hard work, for, with the various things that I had taken upon myself, there was assuredly no idle time.

I shall say nothing more of the scrimping that was at times necessary, and, indeed, the scrimping, no matter how severe, never troubled us greatly except at times when it made us momentarily doubtful of the future. For we weren't bruised in mind by seeing everybody about us prodigal of money. The greater part of our neighbors bought with care, mended their clothes, and noticed it when sugar rose half a cent a pound in the jelly-making season. Some even thriftily

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and cleverly canned the juice without sugar and made jelly in winter, when sugar was cheapest. There was a sort of competition, of emulation, in thrift in the neighborhood that was quite like the competition and emulation in money-spending in the city.

And it was a pleasant correlative feature that the others, for their part, never thought any the less of us through understanding that we were not rich. They never, though, I am certain, suspected our actual straits.

Our position in the village was from the first a pleasant one. We weren't of this family or that; we weren't related to half the folk of the countryside, we didn't know about the endless little bickerings of the last half-century and, what was better, didn't care to; and so we fell easily into friendly place among them, and when fall came were welcomed into the peripatetic whist club whose gay meetings at this house and that, for miles around, were the principal basis of cold-weather social life.

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I was made free, too, with much of gusto, of the local mystery of vinegar making; for it was expounded that it was a regular and time-honored village fiction that a certain amount of cider should be set aside for vinegar, and that a keg or so must be put in the woodshed, "as it won't make such good vinegar if put down cellar," and that in course of time it, being in the woodshed, would surely freeze—all but a potent and wildly alcoholic center—and that a tin tube would do the rest

Out of our own orchard product we made a little money, though we had not anticipated doing so. For while I was away, working on fencing and real estate, my wife fixed up a surprise. She packed six barrels of winter apples, then, after negotiations with our former grocer in the city, she had them hauled to the station by Hadley and shipped in by express. The cost was twenty cents for each barrel and sixty cents a barrel for shipping, and the grocer paid three dollars

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a barrel. Realizing that this might be made an annual deal, my wife made out a list of staple groceries that would tide us through great part of the winter tea, coffee, cereals, starch, candles, soap, raisins, currants, and some luxuries for holidays and emergencies, and told the grocer she would take these in trade instead of actual money. "And it was all done on the sly!" as Hadley put it admiringly, after I learned of it all.

Afterward the grocer asked to have a cask of cider sent in; but it fizzed out at the bung in transit, and was so freely sampled by railroad men with straws that it was not what could be called a thoroughly successful experiment

A supply of apples for our own winter consumption was laid by. These were like those sent to town, all hand-picked; it takes much labor to hand-pick fruit from old and high-growing trees, and all that were windfalls or left in the orchard were turned

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into cider under a share-and-share alike agreement with a local cider-mill

I remember how proud we were, as that first autumn came on, of the things that we were laying by that our own place had produced; the mushrooms, the dried lima beans, the winter squash, the jelly, the vast quantity of blackberry jam, the potatoes and beets and carrots in sand-boxes in the vegetable-cellar, the cabbage and parsnips and celery in the pit in the garden, the apples bedded in maple leaves and laid in our packing crates, the cider, the corn-crib filled for the chickens—and, very important, the chickens themselves!

The general friendliness of village life was of never-ceasing unreality to us, so long had we dwelt where neighborliness was unknown.

“It seems so odd to think that just because of living near you people feel any interest except an inquisitive one,” as a friend from the city put it one day.

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"Oh, they take that kind of interest, too!" said my wife, laughingly; and she told of the watchers with the field-glass on the distant porch

"But how did you ever learn about it?" he asked

"Oh, they were naïve enough to tell about it themselves!"

There was never-ceasing activity on my part in regard to the real-estate work, and fortunately I did not let myself become discouraged because of slowness of results. And at length success began to come.

The very first sale, when it was really made, was for a twelve-thousand-five-hundred-dollar property and my commission was to be two hundred and fifty dollars. I remember how my hand trembled when I opened the envelope and drew out the check. The figures seemed too incredible to be true. Not until this check came did I realize under what a tremendous strain I had been laboring



SHE STARED IN FASCINATION AT THE ENVELOPE—FOR IT
WAS BLUE!

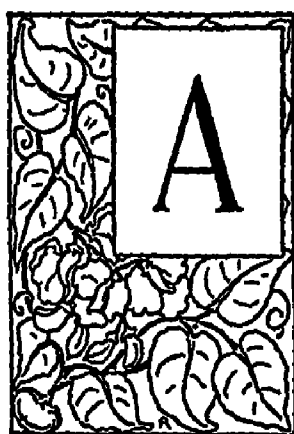
WORKING TOWARD LIBERTY

I took it to my wife Her face whitened
as she looked and read Not until then did
I realize under what a strain she, too, had
been living

And she stared in fascination at the
envelope in which this good fortune had
come, the envelope that had brought us this
assurance of success—for it was blue!

XX

SUCCESS



AND sô there came to us redemption and deliverance, for from this time on success continued, although still with only the hardest kind of work I need not go further into details of the work, for all I am trying to point out is that there is no lack of opportunities The many thousands who are to-day confronting conditions similar to those that confronted me may likewise work out a road to prosperity It may not be and need not be the road I followed, it may be that of the village lawyer, the village paperhanger, the commission merchant, the sales agent, it may

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be that of the busy man-of-all-work As there are people various, so there are paths various, but each one leads to happiness, to health, to essential prosperity Individual aptitude, ability, standards, ambitions, personality—these are what direct into one line or another

Nor have all the possibilities been set down There are others that I might mention and still others waiting for the eyes of the men who can discover them

Politics holds out important possibilities The justice of the peace, the road commissioner, the county commissioner, the state legislator—such offices are worth while as a means not only of accession of income but at the same time of such an advance in public consideration as in itself would work for financial good

I was much surprised to find, in regard to politics, that getting away from the city into the apparently innocent or at least guileless country does not mean getting

A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

away from political management and the purchase of votes. I found that every man's politics is carefully noted. Driving one day for some miles with the local leader, he surprised me by beginning to mention, as we passed house after house, the names of the occupants and their political preferences. When it was a household of only women it was illuminative to hear his unconsciously expressed contempt of them as compared with the value of their hired man!

I found, too—not through this “leader,” however—that money was freely used at each election; and I discovered such curious facts as that it costs very considerably more to buy votes for a road commissioner than for President of the United States. For President, indeed, votes might go begging, or at best, in some special year, be worth perhaps a dollar, whereas for road commissioner, an office carrying with it a good deal of patronage and the spending of a good deal of public money, single votes

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might easily go to five dollars or a little more. The men whose votes were purchasable were known, but as both parties made use of them in turn, and not infrequently bid against one another, there was never any pretense of shocked public morals. It was merely a condition, and as such was unquestioningly accepted. On election day a record was kept, at the polls (very quietly of course), of how many men had been bought and had voted. I remember, at one close election, when I looked in and made guarded inquiries, that forty-eight men, most of them farm-hands, dairy-workers, village ne'er-do-wells, and railroad section laborers, had already cast purchased ballots in that one precinct, and one man, strutting about in insufferable pride, had managed to get money from both sides—two dollars from one and three dollars from the other.

And yet—and here is the strange and incredible part of it—that district is of a

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high average standard as to honesty and decency

When elections, in a close district, must be decided by bribery it is naturally a damper for a man of sensitive honor, but there may be regions where, with one party completely in control, the methods of spending campaign assessments are different

It is certainly a pity that there should be unpleasantness connected with country politics, because it is always possible for an ambitious man who has gone out from the city to live to aim still higher than the offices I have named. Other things being equal, the country dweller with political aspirations stands a far better chance of realizing them than does the city dweller, for the countryman lives out in the open and is from necessity a man of mark—a man seen, he is not lost, covered up, hidden away, like the city dweller, among the mass of others

Through our experiences we came to

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understand that there is something more important than the question of what line of work a man can best take up in the country—whether he shall be laborer or politician, real-estate man or paperhanger, commission merchant or lawyer, a painter or the keeper of a country store. The most important thing of all, if one can but do it, is to provide some little capital in preparation.

Most city workers, if they definitely begin to save, with a definite object, while they are still at their best in earning capacity, can put away money. It doesn't all need to be spent, as it usually is.

If a man can save enough to buy a place such as we secured and also have an income of five hundred dollars a year he can be independent. If he can have more, or continue to earn more at his new home, he is by so much the more independent, but great sums are not indispensable. And with the possession of any small income, even if by no means quite enough to live on,

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there would come the relief from the hard, bitter, grinding struggle such as we ourselves had to go through. But even if you have no more capital than we had it would be unwise, under similar conditions, to hesitate. The country may be hard for a man without much money, but the city is so infinitely harder!

I shall mention only one more of our own plans for good fortune. It came naturally from the marketing of real estate, for it was the idea of renting. Why not rent our own house, furnished, for the next summer? We knew that many houses were rented a little nearer to the city—and why was it not a good time to begin here? If the renting of this house should prove satisfactory it would be an easy matter to develop renting as a system.

Owing principally to the skill and attention of my wife, our home had become a place of real attractiveness. So often in the country the advantages of a house are

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not brought out, but by some sort of magic our place had become a point of interest and had actually acquired a bit of local fame—and all without the expenditure of money!

I told the real-estate folks in town that I could offer an attractive house for the next season, and I spoke of fireplaces, of porch, of old shade, of flowers. There was no use in putting the rent too low, yet it would be impolitic to put it too high; so I compromised on one hundred and seventy-five dollars a season, and agreed to rent it, with about a third of the land, including half of the garden, from June first to October.

In the abstract we feel quite as much dislike as other folks to renting our house and belongings. Of course it is not precisely what one likes to do; but it was not difficult to realize that if I were willing to give for money the best thoughts in me and the hardest kind of work there was no

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reason why I should not make money out of house and furniture

Thus far in our married life our furniture had represented only expense. When we went on summer journeys it had meant that the apartment had to be kept, at its high rent, even though closed—for there was the furniture, there were our books and pictures. When we went on our single European trip it had meant the high charges of a storage warehouse. But now our old friends, the chairs and tables and books and rugs, were to do us a good turn. For once in their existence they were to earn money for us.

The house rented, we took a few simple pieces of furniture and began camp-life in an old cider-house for which I had heretofore found no use. It stood at the far end of the orchard, a broad and low-set little building, with weathered clapboards that had never seen paint. Inside it was only rafters and beams, but it was habitable and

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attractive, and we at once set about making it more habitable still and more attractive by building a stone fireplace at one end of the room, putting in a home-made casement window, adding a lean-to roof and paving under this with flat stones from the creek, rolling up boulders for a path edge, setting out ferns and flowers—in all, working like beavers and once more showing that we had become self-reliant beings. How long ago it seemed since everything was left to the janitor and a tack-hammer was our only tool! The chimney I built myself, and I very much fear that I felt excessively proud of it.

One morning we awoke to find that an encampment of gipsies had been made near us over night, and it was a curious and animated scene. The canvas-topped wagons, the flutter and glow of color in reds and yellows and greens, the swarthy men, taciturn, observant, composed, the women, dark-faced, keen-eyed, brilliant as to ker-

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chief and skirt; the picketed horses, the ponies; the unpedigreed dogs, thin and rangy; the kettles and blankets, the outdoor fires, made of a couple of sticks—all were romantic.

And to us came an ancient woman with wonderful eyes, deep and bright; with black hair braided and looped; with great hooped earrings “Eggs?” she said, and when my wife gave her some she took her hand to tell her fortune in exchange

She was the fortune-teller of the tribe, and she looked long at my wife’s hand, then glanced shrewdly into her eyes, wondering at the meagerness of our household furnishings. It was evident that she could not understand

However, she told of this or that, hitting more often than missing, cleverly keeping on with what mind-reading or guesswork or observation told her. And after a while she said, more slowly—and I saw her glance again at our few bits of furniture “You

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have been hard pressed, but your troubles are over " She paused and I thought she had finished, and then she said, with a sort of soft suddenness "And your children will be an honor to you!"

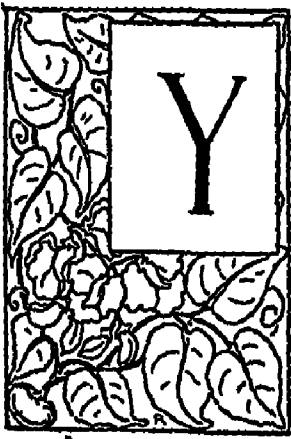
The witch had touched on the dearest ambition of all . . the ambition that at length had become realizable . . .

She caught the almost startled glance that passed between my wife and myself, and said, with a grave and kindly wisdom "And hasn't it all paid?"

There lay the essence of it all It had paid, and paid royally

XXI

THE REALIZATION



ES, there lay the essence of it all. It had paid, and paid royally. Not in actual money, compared with standards of the past, but in having shown us the intrinsic falseness of mere money as a standard. For how much simpler and clearer are life's problems now that we understand that the amount of money income is not of importance, that the important thing is the satisfying of needs, and that, if needs can be satisfied with a hundred dollars instead of a thousand, the smaller sum becomes at once of the same value as the larger!

THE REALIZATION

We had gone out in the open, seeking for liberty.

“Out in the open”—somehow, as I write the words, it comes to me that they typify the basis of success in the country; for it is the free and open life, the life of fresh air, the life of individual effort, the life that sets one far back toward primitive conditions, that counts. A man who goes to the country and works out his salvation there strips away false conventionality, gets down to first principles, and shows his kinship with primitive man.

But thus to win success is not easy. It requires strain and stress, it may require a very agony of effort. But success is sure if the effort is made.

There is eternal truth in the ancient myth of the wrestler who, being thrown, recovered his full strength and became irresistible the instant his body touched the earth. For that is it, as truly in this twentieth century as amid the mists of antiquity. Get back

A LIVING WITHOUT A BOSS

to the fresh earth, back to first principles, back to the primitive!

The two greatest men in American history are Washington and Lincoln; yet Lincoln was not great because he was of a poor and undistinguished family, nor was Washington great because he was of a family distinguished and rich. Both men were irresistible because they got down to the essentials of life. Lincoln splitting rails, Washington in the winter wilderness as primitive as an Indian—such things are typical of their essential lifetime standards.

To go out into a village and live is worth while, not only for the hitherto unsuccessful, but for those whom the world calls successful, if it will strip away error and teach first principles.

If one can go to his garden and chicken-yard and orchard for food, if one is ready to plan and work, to struggle and persist, to give no heed to disappointments and aim

THE REALIZATION

steadily at the goal, he will win the best that life has to offer.

Out here—out here in the open—out in the country—we have learned many things We have learned to love the noble serenity of tree and hill and sky, the splendid quietness of the country; and the memory of the strident roar of the city is like a dream We have learned to know the value and the beauty of the word “neighbor” And as day by day we grow younger and stronger we know that to get back toward primitive conditions is not only making life happier but is at the same time lengthening it

THE END